"You Look Good in Green" Prosocial Campaign

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H&M is an international clothing company that is expanding rapidly across the globe (Markets & Expansion, n.d.). In 2019 alone they intended to open two hundred and forty stores. This was good news, not only for fashion lovers, but for those who value sustainability and environmentally friendly practices. H&M has implemented a textile recycling program where anyone can drop off used clothing and textiles so they may be recycled and put to use again. To provide an example of how this program could be promoted, a pro social campaign called "You Look Good in Green" was created with the goal of increasing the program's participation. One of the ways it aimed to achieve this goal was to use persuasion theory and research to create original posters that were intended to influence behaviour.

The posters created for the promotional campaign were intended to persuade people at local universities, grocery stores, and shopping malls to recycle their old and discarded clothing. To accomplish this, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) was followed, in addition to using persuasive strategies outlined by Perloff (2017) and Cialdini (2009). The ELM explains the processes involved with persuasion, depending on if a message is being centrally or peripherally processed (Perloff, 2017). Individuals who centrally process persuasive messages are more likely to critically evaluate the argument and its potential implications. In contrast, those who peripherally process persuasive messages are more likely to depend on simple cues (e.g., images of a celebrity) before accepting or rejecting the position advocated by a persuasive campaign (Perloff, 2017). Other strategies that were used included guilt, cognitive dissonance, attitude functions, and the appeal of consistency. Most are familiar with the concept of guilt and consistency, whereas cognitive dissonance and attitude functions are terms less commonly used outside of psychological discussion. Cognitive dissonance is when an individual holds two incompatible thoughts that result in an unpleasant feeling, whereas attitude functions are the essence of functional theory. Perloff (2017) states that in this theory a

message is more likely to be persuasive if it targets the underlying function an attitude serves to an individual. The strategies that have just been described were applied on two different posters in the hopes that people would be persuaded by the message regardless of whether it was centrally or peripherally processed (see Figure 1). Both posters were intended to target people who already recycle everyday items like bottles, cans, and paper. The feeling of guilt was evoked by using cognitive dissonance by highlighting how individuals currently engage in recycling behaviors associated with bottles, cans, and paper; yet, these behaviors were not carried forward for items such as clothing – making individuals aware that they had only fulfilled a part of their recycling actions. Although the mere exposure effect was also technically at work here due to the mass distribution of posters in various locations, it was not intended to be a focus of the strategy. The specific strategies of guilt, cognitive dissonance, attitude functions, and the appeal of consistency were central to the design of the posters; however, the mere exposure was also acknowledged as an influential factor.

Poster 1 attempted to evoke a feeling of guilt by asking the reader why they do not recycle their old and unused clothing. This message is geared to make people feel guilty for throwing away old clothes and make them feel they are not upholding their recycling beliefs. Guilt arousal is correlated with higher intentions to donate (Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007). Although clothing is not being donated, the campaign is still prosocial, so the concept should still be effective in these circumstances. Perloff (2017) argues that guilt is a necessary factor, but not enough on its own. In order to make the person more likely to be persuaded they also need to feel that they are able to make a difference. This is done in the form of self-efficacy, which is needed to make guilt an effective persuasive technique. This is why Poster 1 concluded with "You can make a huge difference" and Poster 2 states "By recycling you are helping keep millions of clothes out of landfills." Both of these messages are trying to make it clear that the readers contribution does actually make a difference in waste reduction – increasing their perceived self-efficacy.

Guilt is not the only function that Poster 1 serves, as it also persuades consumers by inducing cognitive dissonance. Guilt is simply a byproduct of cognitive dissonance. Perloff (2017) explains that cognitive dissonance occurs when we have two conflicting ideas.

Poster 1 achieves this by using the phrase "You recycle your cans, why not your clothes?" For those who do recycle their cans, this would create an uncomfortable feeling because they

would identify themselves as people who do recycle, yet they do not recycle their textiles – which are a major contributor to landfills (Echeverria, Handolo, Pahlevani, & Sahajwalla, 2019). They would therefore be motivated to take the necessary steps required to reduce this uncomfortable feeling caused by their inner contradictory thoughts and their actual actions.

Cialdini (2009) explains that the reason a contradictory thought is uncomfortable for people is because of their desire to be consistent with regards to their beliefs and behaviors. When an inconsistent behaviour is brought to one's attention, it is found to be unpleasant. This need for consistency is derived from three factors: consistency is highly valued in our society, acting consistently is beneficial in daily life, and consistency allows one to make shortcuts during decision making (Cialdini, 2009). Poster 1 appeals to peoples need for consistency. The first part of the phrase, "You recycle your cans," is stating something that most of us already do. The second part, which asks "why not your clothes?" hopefully points out to the reader an inconsistency in their behaviour. When people read the poster and have their behaviour labeled as inconsistent this should be motivating enough to create change.

The posters used the ELM to guide people who viewed the sign to centrally or peripherally process the message. Clear, concise, and easy to understand language was used so that one's English fluency did not inhibit comprehension. The poster was also created with the assumption that most people have unused or unwanted clothes in their closet that they need to get rid of. Locating a clothing donation bin can be time consuming and requires that people take time out of their busy schedules to make inconvenient trips to donation bins to discard old clothes. However, people frequently go to the mall to buy things throughout the year; therefore, being able to donate unused clothing at the mall is seen as a more convenient option for consumers looking to recycle. This convenience was highlighted to increase the saliency to people viewing the poster, resulting in higher involvement. Poster 1 does not contain statistics or much writing on it, this was done with the intent to persuade individuals using peripheral processing, which requires lower cognitive effort. This strategy provides an avenue to persuade individuals who would otherwise be deterred by a text heavy message. Poster 2 however was intended to pique the interest of those with a higher need for cognition, as it contains more statistics and information.

Poster 2 also appeals to attitude functions, specifically to the value expressive function. Perloff (2017) gives an example of the value expressive attitude function with the example of

someone supporting recycling programs because they value the environment. Poster 2 utilized multiple symbols and pictures which are associated with recycling. This was done so people who value the environment would have their interest piqued by the poster (again causing them to centrally process the message) and would be more interested because the poster is targeting their value expressive attitude function. Perloff (2017) argues that piquing a reader's interest and targeting their value expressive attitude function makes the individual more likely to be persuaded by the message. Studies have also shown that whether someone is a high or low self-monitor can impact which attitude function is most likely to affect them (DeBano, 1987). Those who are high self-monitors are more likely to be persuaded by a message that serves a social adjustive function, as they value fitting in with their peers more. In contrast, low self-monitors base their decisions on inner thoughts and attitudes and were more likely to be persuaded if the message targeted a value expressive function (DeBono, 1987). For these reasons, both posters appeal more to those who are lower self-monitors because they implemented a value expressive function.

The omission of certain aspects on the posters were equally important to aspects included. For example, recycling symbols were purposely excluded on Poster 1 to avoid people from using availability heuristics with regards to the recycling symbols. Using the availability heuristic would increase the likelihood that they would peripherally process the poster's message. The recycling symbol has come to represent items such as cans, paper, and plastic. Since the aim of the posters is to get people to recycle their clothes, avoiding these classic recycling symbols would decrease the likelihood that people would simply disregard the poster before reading it. If the campaign was to implement a third poster, it would have included actress and activist Emma Watson and her mobile phone app "Good On You" (www.goodonyou.eco) which promotes buying from ethical companies who have taken steps to reduce their environmental impact from the production of their textiles. She would have served as a peripheral cue for people who were not interested in recycling because she is an attractive and well-respected celebrity. Readers would therefore make their judgements about the information on the poster based on their liking of Ms. Watson instead of what the poster actually said. In addition to the use of a celebrity, on another poster it would have been effective to have a place for readers to sign their name in a pledge to recycle their clothes. This would have increased the likelihood of the reader following

through with the commitment because people will often justify their reasons for behaving a certain way once they have said they would (Cialdini, 2009).

Overall, the posters intended to target individuals who process persuasive messages both centrally and peripherally in conjunction with various persuasive strategies. The goal of having two different posters was that our message would reach and persuade a wider audience. Each poster individually applied strategies by Caildini (2009) and Perloff (2017) that aimed to persuade the reader to recycle their clothes. The strategies implemented were cognitive dissonance, guilt, attitude function, need for consistency, and Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) ELM. The messages on both posters applied guilt and need for consistency, but Poster 1 applied cognitive dissonance more than Poster 2. Both used the ELM, including the use of simple language, need for central and peripheral routes of persuasion, and appeal for involvement. The posters were also brightly coloured which was done to catch the reader's eye, increasing the chances that they might read more of the facts on the poster. It is evident that many of the strategies used for persuasion have considerable overlap; as such, many of them can be used at once. This is especially useful knowledge to carry forward into a large variety of careers as a majority of businesses or organizations have information that needs to be conveyed to a large audience.

Figures

Figure 1. "You Look Good in Green" promotional posters. Poster 1 left, Poster 2 right.

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