
Few areas in our field are as important to managers and researchers alike as that of influencing human behavior. We strive to control vandalism, motivate potential tourists to travel to particular states or resorts, discourage camping techniques that damage natural resources, encourage different trail user groups to respect one another, and undertake other efforts aimed at influencing the ways people think and act. To make matters more challenging, we recognize that the recreation experience is largely about freedom and, therefore, we attempt to influence behavior in lighthanded ways that rely on persuasion rather than enforcement. This can be a challenge, to say the least. Part of the challenge, particularly for managers, has been finding sound but practical information to guide their efforts. Thanks to Michael Manfredo and a group of other experts from a wide range of related fields, there is now much better guidance. Influencing Human Behavior: Theory and Applications in Recreation, Tourism, and Natural Resources Management is an outstanding resource for managers, researchers, and students.

This book takes on the imposing task of reviewing the literature regarding persuasive communications and applying it to selected aspects of our field. Its premise is that theory should guide persuasive communication in practice and research and that parks, recreation, and tourism management is an ideal providing ground for advances in persuasive communications theory and practice. It is organized around its two stated goals: (1) to overview the prominent theories in persuasion, and (2) to focus on several distinct areas in our applied disciplines, reviewing the existing literature and making suggestions for new theoretical directions in these areas.

The book consists of a collection of eleven chapters, each by experts addressing related topics from slightly different perspectives. The first five chapters review and extend the most prominent theories that currently address persuasive communication. The sixth forms a transition that leads into the final four chapters which attempt to apply what we know about persuasive communication to several vexing challenges facing our field. Its organization and treatment of topics is successful. It effectively links theory with practice and will provide guidance for thoughtful researchers and practitioners. It is a rare example of a work that will be useful and interesting to both researchers and managers.

The authors cast an appropriately broad net in discussing literature that is relevant to influencing human behavior including: parks, recreation, and tourism management (resource impacts, user conflict, vandalism and
depreciative behavior, fees and charges); social psychology; public health (from experiences in planning for and evaluating public information campaigns); environmental psychology; sociology; education; criminology; and consumer psychology. The treatment of existing theory is thorough and provides an excellent foundation. Ick Ajzen provides an excellent review of persuasive behavior literature, where we stand today and how we got here. Martin Fishbein and Michael Manfredo follow with a review of the Theory of Reasoned Action including a useful application to influencing public opinions regarding a controlled burning policy. Mark A. Vincent and Russell H. Fazio tie the Process Model of Attitudes in with the Theory of Reasoned Action. Their emphasis on attitude accessibility is an important addition in providing an explanation for why we sometimes deliberately process information while at other times act more “automatically.” The differences in motivation and opportunity to engage in deliberate information processing they identify as crucial in this regard are variables that managers must take into account and ones that can sometimes be influenced as information campaigns are planned and implemented.

The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion is presented and explained by Richard E. Petty, Stacy McMichael and Laura A. Brannon. Their discussion builds well on the previous papers by clarifying the “central” and “peripheral routes” to persuasion and the short and long term implications of each. The chapter is excellent in terms of content as well as presentation. This is an exciting theory that provides excellent guidance for managers and researchers alike.

Michael Slater’s very readable chapter on mass communication was one of several outstanding contributions and provides a strong transition between the theory and application sections of the book. He provides excellent, concise summaries of theory and applications in mass communications that yield important principles. Particularly useful were his discussions of market segmentation and the capabilities and limitations of mass media in persuasive communication.

Joseph W. Roggenbuck makes the book’s first attempt to apply the theories to practice in his chapter entitled, “Use of Persuasion to Reduce Resource Impacts and Visitor Conflicts.” This chapter is extremely thorough and could have become a valuable book in its own right. He reviews the nature, amount, causes, and trends of impacts and conflicts in recreation settings. He classifies impact behaviors, and then evaluates the appropriateness and feasibility of persuasive communication in reducing impacts and conflicts in recreation settings. Although he regards much of this as “best guess and as testable conjecture,” it gives excellent direction for future research. He also provides an excellent review of empirical studies on the effectiveness of persuasive communication in reducing impacts and conflicts in park settings and insightfully presents the implications of this literature. This chapter is thought provoking and an outstanding reference.

In their chapter, “A Multidisciplinary Model for Managing Vandalism and Depreciative Behavior in Recreation Settings,” Richard C. Knopf and
Daniel L. Dustin skillfully blend the perspectives of recreation and park management, environmental psychology, education, criminology, and sociology and bring them to bear on the topic of vandalism and deprecative behavior. They effectively argue that our biggest problem is that we have not defined these problems properly. They propose that rather than continue to view vandals as deviants and perpetrators, we recognize that they are need driven like any recreationist and that their propensity for vandalistic or deprecative behavior is shaped by society, community, management, and the physical environment. As such, we must look beyond simple coercion to enforce what may be rather arbitrary definitions of “acceptable” behavior. They offer several intriguing alternatives including community involvement, minimizing environmental cues that communicate that deviant acts are not serious, designing for a more “human scale”, and subtle “behavioral channelling”. They also present a thoughtful model for the management of vandalism and deprecative behavior in recreation settings.

I found this chapter to be insightful, straightforward and informative. Their call for a paradigm shift toward viewing vandalism and deprecative behavior as goal-directed and needs-driven was significant. The idea that there are multiple causes beyond the individual has important practical and theoretical implications. Although their proposition is certainly true, we will have to be careful to acknowledge these broader causes and address them without abandoning individual responsibility and accountability. The authors’ main point is well taken; “alternatives to coercive force exist, and these alternatives have not been fully exercised in recreation settings.”

One of the best contributions is the chapter entitled “Persuasive Communication and Pricing of Public Leisure Services” by Ronald E. McCarville, B. L. Driver, and John L. Crompton. In it, the authors apply the theoretical perspectives in the book to the issue of fees and pricing in recreation settings, pointing out that price can be seen as a persuasive tool and also as the object of persuasive communication (e.g., attitudes about prices and fees). To address this issue, they develop a model which integrates the “fragments” of current theory into an “integrative, general model of persuasion”. It is thoughtful and comprehensive and applies to all forms of persuasive communication. I found that their model retained the best of its theoretical predecessors and added considerably to them. Their review of the literature relating specifically to fees and pricing of leisure services demonstrated the need for considerable research in this area and the model they propose provides excellent guidance in this regard.

Stephen F. McCool and Amy M. Braithwaite address the issue of the role of persuasive messages in visitor safety and hazards. They define hazards, review related literature and discuss methods for dealing with hazards including persuasive communications. The authors pose numerous questions worthy of further research.

In the final chapter, “Research in Tourism Advertising,” Michael J. Manfredo, Alan D. Bright, and Glenn E. Haas provide an excellent review of advertising theory and its applications. They identify methodological
problems with standard “conversion” studies and point out a lack of research in advertising for tourism in general. Consumer psychology is shown to be a fruitful source of theory and methods for tourism advertising researchers. This chapter provides an excellent literature review and is another valuable resource. It also makes thoughtful suggestions for future research, including the role of involvement in information processing, the effects of nonverbal stimuli in advertising, and the affective reactions to advertisements and how these emotional responses might affect purchase decisions.

Perhaps the most valuable contribution made by this book is that it gathers so much useful information into one place. It provides a thorough review and extension of theory for those familiar with this area as well as an outstanding springboard for newcomers. Many of the chapters would make excellent reading for graduate students and advanced undergraduates and the 67 pages of citations provided make this an important reference volume. The only thing missing is a final chapter that might have better integrated the chapters into a single work and provided better direction. The topic of influencing behavior is presented as an integrated one that affects all aspects of our field and yet the chapters sometimes seem fragmented. The book ends abruptly where a recap and synthesis could have brought the reader back to the overall importance of the subject and provided a future orientation. The authors miss an opportunity to identify the most pressing research questions and better guide where we go from here. But this is a minor omission.

_Influencing Human Behavior_ is really about communication. Communication among researchers, between researchers and managers, and more effective communication with the recreating public. In this regard the book is a success and is an important contribution to nearly all aspects of parks, recreation, and tourism management.

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To the Book Reviews Editor:

The review of _The Sociology of Leisure_ in Volume 25, Number 4, 1993, has prompted a unique response. The authors, Kelly and Godbey, have published fourteen books, received all kinds of reviews, and never responded. Critical reviews are, after all, a necessary and useful part of the process of building the literature of a field and providing for the development of each new cohort of students. The review by Professor Margaret Carlisle Duncan does seem to us, however, to be so unbalanced as to limit the possibility that the book may take a part in that process.