

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF LOW CARBON LIVING

Our goal

Improve our prediction of low carbon household behaviours by extending the Reasoned Action Approach model (RAA) with Social Practice Theory (SPT).

Why predict behaviour?

If we can predict behaviour, we can change it; A sound behaviour model is the blueprint for a lower carbon future.

Why extend the RAA with SPT?

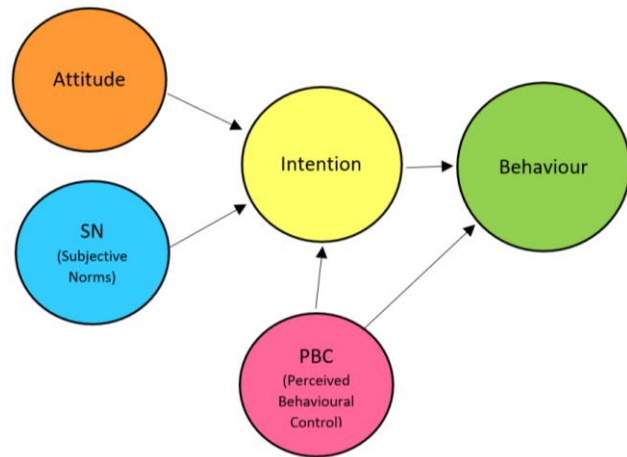


Figure 1: The Reasoned Action Approach is the current gold standard behaviour model.

The Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) is the current gold-standard model for behaviour prediction. It dictates that behaviour is predicted by intentions and perceived behavioural control. Intentions, in turn, are predicted by:

- ❖ **Attitudes:** Evaluation of the behaviour; positive vs. negative, helpful vs. unhelpful etc.
- ❖ **Subjective norms:** The extent to which the behaviour is thought to be performed by most people (descriptive), or approved of by most people (injunctive).
- ❖ **Perceived behavioural control:** The sum of perceived barriers to, and

facilitators of, behaviour.

The RAA predicts approximately 27% of the variance in behaviour, on average. This may be because of its limited account of the context in which a behaviour is performed. Context is important in the prediction of two groups of behaviours that are instrumental in low carbon living; purchasing behaviours, and habits.

Adding context through SPT

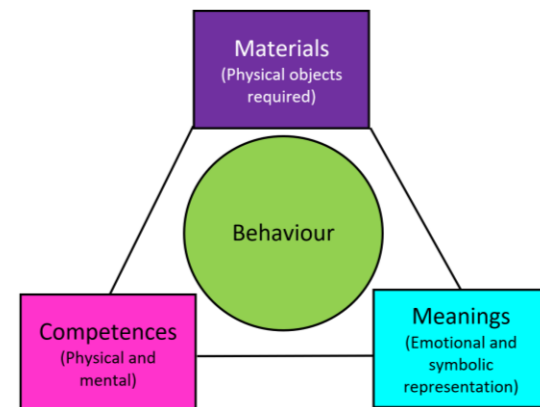


Figure 2: In Social Practice Theory, behaviours are bundles of the context in which they are formed. The 3 components of context are: Materials, meanings, and competences.

Social Practice Theory (SPT) dictates that behaviour is a combination of three categories of contextual factors:

- ❖ **Meanings** associated with the behaviour (e.g. environmentally friendly, happiness, etc.).
- ❖ **Materials** required to perform the behaviour (e.g. money, wrench, etc.).
- ❖ Mental and physical **competences** involved in behaviour performance (e.g. research skills, strength, etc.).

Merging the RAA and SPT

Perceived behavioural control is the closest thing to context that the RAA addresses. If SPT predicts intentions to perform a behaviour, over-and-above perceived behavioural control, the theory stands to enhance the RAA.

1. Empiricise SPT.

In order to compare it to RAA constructs; we needed to construct SPT measures (2015).

2. Create SPT measures.

Once we knew what materials, meanings, and competences people associate with low carbon household behaviours, we used them to create RAA-like measures (2016).

3. Compare SPT to RAA components...

Our SPT measures predicted intentions better than the RAA's perceived behavioural control; the best of the 2 contextual measures.

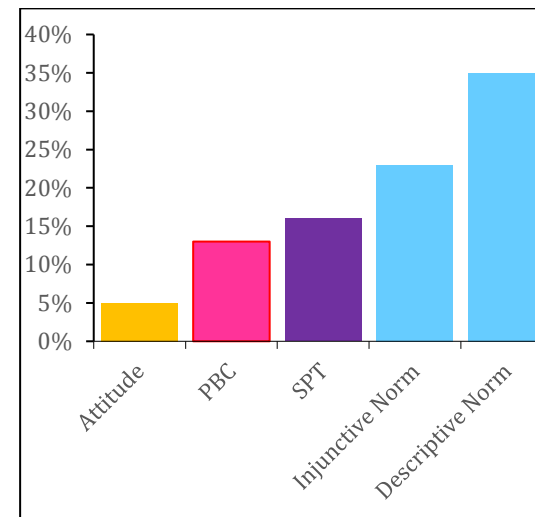


Figure 3: Percentage of variance in intentions to perform low-carbon household behaviours predicted by SPT measures, and attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC (from the RAA).

Conclusions

SPT predicts intentions to perform carbon-relevant household behaviours better than the RAA's perceived behavioural control construct.

Anticipated impacts

We can now use this knowledge to create behavioural interventions to reduce household carbon footprints. This is one step closer to greener homes and futures.



Figure 4: We can now build interventions that reduce household carbon footprints, and create greener homes and futures.

Social practice theory predicts intentions better than perceived behavioural control

Further information

For more details on this, and other exciting projects, get in touch with our Social Action Lab at the University of Melbourne: <http://psychologicalsciences.unimelb.edu.au/research/msps-research-groups/social-action-laboratory>

Or visit the LCLCRC website:

<http://www.lowcarbonlivingcrc.com.au/>

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