

Nathan For You's "The Movement":

The use of informational influence to affect people's decision making and satisfaction

In the television show *Nathan For You*, Nathan Fielder seeks to help real-world small business by coming up with plans to improve their business. In the episode "The Movement" Nathan is trying to help a moving company cut down on their cost of labor. His plan involves creating a new fitness craze that centers around moving household items and furniture in order to convince people to work for the moving company free of charge. To do so, Nathan hires a professional body-builder named Jack Garbarino and has a book ghost-written about his life, called "The Movement". The book claims that he used to be obese and that he got his physique solely from working out with household items. Nathan then has the body-builder go on news networks claiming to be an expert on weight loss in order to get people interested in the idea. Based on the book and news appearances, a number of people reach out to Nathan in the hopes of trying out the "The Movement" exercise. Nathan selects three of these people and has them complete an entire moving job for free, under the pretense that it is not a real moving job and is instead just for exercise. The people not only agree to go along with this, they also enjoy themselves and report satisfaction with the experience they had. This satisfaction is despite the fact that there is no real evidence or backing for the workout.

Assertion

In this situation, Nathan and Jack are influencing people's decision making. The influence they exert is particularly impactful on those with high motivation to get healthy, as those are the people who would be most affected by this product. By having Jack claim to be an expert on exercise with a book written about him, they are portraying him as someone with a lot of knowledge and information about losing weight. Many different news stations have Jack on

their shows, which adds to his appearance as a knowledgeable figure in the field. While on the talk shows, Jack demonstrates a number of his methods and gives a lot of information about how good the workout is. This is effective at getting the general public to accept the outlandish claims that they are making and even gets people to want to try out the exercise themselves. They have been led to believe that they really could lose over one hundred pounds just by lifting everyday household items. When the three volunteers arrive to try out the workout, Nathan greets them dressed in workout apparel and gives them information about what they will be doing. During the workout, Nathan gives specific instructions and information about the workout, telling them how to get a cardio exercise and how that is good for them. Nathan is also the host of what the participants believe to be reality television show, with an implied audience of millions of viewers, strengthening his influence. All of these sources of information factor into the influence that Nathan and Jack are having on the decision making and satisfaction of the people doing the workout, showing a clear case of informational influence.

Conceptual Explanation

The psychological concept that applies to this scenario is informational influence. Informational influence is a result of a person believing that another person or another group of people has correct information or judgments. This belief results in conforming to the information or judgment that they received, meaning a person will act on and believe what they are told. New information presented, especially when presented from a larger number of people or in a group setting, can drastically change a person's decision and attitude about something. In the scenario, the information is presented on multiple television networks. Not only are the people on the screen presenting the information, but there is also the implied weight of all the people working at the stations and writing for the reporters. According to social impact theory, influence is

affected by strength, immediacy, and number of people relative to the target group of people.

The strength of the influence is high due to the information coming from news organizations, and there are a lot of people backing up the claim, resulting in a lot of social influence in the form of informational influence. The same applies to Nathan talking to the three participants in the workout. Even though they technically outnumber him, his influence is still high because of the number of people in his camera crew and production team, and the implied number of his audience members.

References and Empirical Evidence

The first study that provides evidence of the effectiveness of informational influence is *Informational Influence as a Determinant of Perceived Task Characteristics and Job Satisfaction* (O'Reilly & Caldwell 1979). The goal of the study was to find out if informational influence affected perceptions about parts of a task and about overall job satisfaction. 42 graduate business students were given a proposal for a work-study program for their graduate admissions office. In order to do so, they did a sample of what the work would entail. Two tasks, one enriched and one unenriched were designed for different groups of subjects, and for two of the groups, the subjects were either given informational cues that described the task as enriched or unenriched. This resulted in four separate groups, two of which were subject to informational influence and two which were not. Both tasks involved processing applications to an MBA program using, with the unenriched task requiring subjects to only code data and the enriched task requiring a detailed reading and evaluation of the application. Then, the subjects were shown previous sample evaluations that were either enriched or unenriched. The enriched evaluations said that the job would be good and interesting and the unenriched said it would be bad and uninteresting. After completing the tasks the subjects then gave evaluations of their perceptions about the task

characteristics and about their job satisfaction. The study found that informational cues had a strong influence on reports of task characteristics and especially on overall job satisfaction. Those that received enriched informational cues rated the task characteristics and satisfaction much higher than those who didn't, and the opposite was true for those who received unenriched informational cues. Therefore it was determined that informational influence had a strong relation to these metrics.

The second study that supports the assertion is *Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention of Fashion Products on Social Networking Websites* (Saleem & Ellahi 2017). This study explored a number of factors, including informational influence, and the effect these had on decision making. The goal of the study is to find the effect of electronic word of mouth on the purchase intention for Facebook users. The study surveyed 503 Facebook users with a closed-ended questionnaire. The effects of homophily, expertness, trustworthiness, informational influence, and high fashion involvement had between 5 and 7 items on the questionnaire. The questionnaire also included items about electronic word of mouth and purchase intention. All of these items used a five-point Likert scale for data collection. The study found that homophily, expertness, trustworthiness, informational influence, and high fashion involvement were all significantly related to electronic word of mouth which is in turn significantly related to purchase intention. It should also be noted that all of the independent variables also had strongly related to purchase intention directly, with the strongest relationship being informational influence. This means that not only did informational influence indirectly impact people's purchase intention through word of mouth, it also had direct effects on the purchase intention of the people itself.

The third study, *Consumer Attitudes Toward Dietary Supplements Consumption: Implications for Pharmaceutical Marketing* (Nor Azila et al., 2014), explores informational

influence and its relation to health motivation. The goal of the study was to examine whether the effects of social cognition on intention to consume health supplements were affected by health motivation. The study used a cross-sectional survey approach on 438 undergraduate students from six universities in Malaysia. A personally administered survey was given to each subject, and the subjects were given definitions of dietary supplements and asked to refer to these definitions while responding to the questionnaire. The survey used a seven-point Likert scale to quantify the data. The study found that informational influence is shown to predict behavioral intention positively and has a nonsignificant effect on attitude. Specifically, informational influence affected attitude more for low health motivation groups and affected behavioral intention to consume supplements more in the high health motivation groups. This study is similar to the previous study in that they both show a strong relationship between informational influence and consumer intention, with this one also showing that higher motivation for health leads to a greater informational influence on intention to act.

The actions taken and information presented by Nathan Fielder and Jack Garbarino in “The Movement” influenced their audience in a significant way. This informational influence strongly affected the way the participants in the workout saw their tasks and the positive response they had to them, which is supported by the evidence from O’Reilly & Caldwell (1979). Additionally, the informational influence affected the way the general public’s intention to purchase product of the book and the service of the workout in the first place, which is backed by the evidence from Saleem & Ellahi (2017). The motivation to get healthy was also an important factor, which is why those with higher motivation were most likely to be affected by informational influence claiming that “The Movement” would improve health. This is supported

by Nor Azila et al. (2014). Nathan was very successful in this plan, as his informational influence caused people to try, and subsequently enjoy his fabricated workout.

References

- Nor Azila, M. N., Yap, S., Kok-Hong, L., & Rajah, E. (2014). Consumer attitudes toward dietary supplements consumption: Implications for pharmaceutical marketing. *International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Marketing*, 8(1), 6-26.
<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/10.1108/IJPHM-04-2013-0019>
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Caldwell, D. F. (1979). Informational influence as a determinant of perceived task characteristics and job satisfaction. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 64(2), 157-165.
<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy1.usc.edu/10.1037/0021-9010.64.2.157>
- Saleem, A., & Ellahi, A. (2017). Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention of Fashion Products on Social Networking Websites. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 11(2), 597-622.
<http://libproxy.usc.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy1.usc.edu/docview/1954861366?accountid=14749>