Using Social marketing Initiatives to Address Disconnection in the Lockyer Valley Region

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Introduction

The Lockyer Valley (LV) lies west of Brisbane and east of Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, and is an area recognised as exhibiting high-levels of disconnection between its residents. High-levels of community disconnection may impede sustainable growth, affect the ongoing flood recovery and impede initiatives by the local council and state government to improve connectivity. This makes the LV an interesting case to study ways of reducing residential disconnection and building community connectivity. Feelings of disconnect occur when residents have a separate self-schema and feel separate or distinct from other residents (Babin & Harris, 2011). Some residents do not identify with the LV as a place to call home, and more readily identify with neighbouring regions such as Ipswich, Somerset and Toowoomba, as these areas are where some LV residents work and/or send their children to school. Underpinning connectivity is community engagement (CE) theory, which is a synergistic activity whereby participants exchange information, experience relationships and the pleasures of human contact which, in turn, rewards participating people intrinsically through pride in oneself and extrinsically by way of social approval (Abdul-Ghani, Hyde & Marshall, 2011). CE theories suggest that identifying with a single community, feeling connectedness and having a sense of belongingness leads to positive outcomes for the locality (LV) and its residents (Rose, 2000; Mathwick, Wiertz & Ruyter, 2008). CE theorists (e.g. Foster-Fisherman, Cantillon, Pierce & Van Egeren, 2007; Taylor, 2007) also suggest that residents should be drivers of the change process. The Catch-22 situation for the LV is how the residents can drive a change if they are not connecting with each other or perceiving their own self-schema as a LV resident.

This is a conceptual paper as the prelude to a case study project featuring the Lockyer Valley (LV) region. It is envisaged the project will consist of three phases: the first as reported herein (the connectivity aspect); the second phase will involve making connections and establishing the engagement processes; and the third phase will involve establishing a broader sense of purpose and moving residents in the NE corner towards identity with the 'brand' (LV Region). An observation of the literature shows us that sociology/psychology/social policy theory is typically used to underpin most CE endeavours (especially in the areas of health, law and order, government, education, etc.) and that, typically, there is existing connectivity. It is our view that consumer behaviour (CB) theory (relating to social marketing) might be a better 'fit' when connectivity does not exist. Social marketing (SM) is a tool used by governments and community groups to apply marketing principles to influence and change people's behaviours for social good (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Within the marketing context, there are a number of theories—and the most relevant of these for the LV situation appear to be CB theories relating to attitude change (AC).

Attitude Change Theories

There are a number of attitude change (AC) theories including the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), Hierarchy of Effects (Barry, 1987), Balance (or Consistency) Theory (Heider, 1958; Woodside, 2004), Social Judgement Theory (Doherty & Kurz, 1996), Heuristic-Systematic Model of Information Processing (Chaiken, Liberman & Eagly, 1989) and Compliance, Identification and Internalisation (Kolman, 1938). Each of these theories focus on the thought processes of people, their feelings and behaviours, and recognise that disengaged individuals are unlikely to seek change and may even dismiss initiatives aimed at them.

These AC theories and CE theories share a number of characteristics, as both attitudes and engagement are cognitive, affective and behavioural (Boxelaar, Paine & Beilin, 2006;

Lavery, Tinadana, Scott, Harrington, Ramsey, Ytuarte-Nunez & James, 2010). That is, engaged residents should have a positive state of mind characterized by high energy, commitment, and loyalty toward a geographical area (e.g., the Lockyer Valley) and they should experience positive feelings or emotions about people living in the same area, as well as to the locality itself (Ryan, Agnitsch, Zhao & Mullick, 2005).

Where AC theories and CE theories differ is that CE theories do not take into account the issue of disengagement or disconnection, or focus on ways to create the initial connection. Using AC theories together with CE theories (see Figure 1) can create multiple pathways to facilitate change. Asking people to change is a difficult process and AC theories take into account people that are 'unaware' or 'dis-interested' (e.g. the disengaged), which is an important issue.

Subsequently, we created Figure 1 which extends current CE theory by encapsulating the CE hierarchical model and the various AC theories to create multiple change-pathways to connectivity (phase 1) and engagement (phase 2). Essentially, a community that is connected and engaged should be 'like-minded' in as much that they have a shared consciousness and a shared sense of belonging, as well as a sense of shared identity, traditions and a moral obligation to help individual members and the community as a whole (Farmer, Dawson, Martin & Tucker 2007; Eversole, 2012) (phase 3). Which of the model's pathways is used in each phase will depend on the LV residents' awareness, involvement, willingness and motivation to change. Other important factors to facilitate this change process includes existing social networks, government resources, stakeholder resources, structures in place and opinion leaders to champion the change (Chaskin, 2001; Andreasen 2002).

At the heart of Figure 1 (the three-phase change process) is value (intrinsic and extrinsic); and to facilitate the change process people must perceive value (what is in it for me?). The behavioural component of engagement reflects a community member's willingness to participate and cooperate with others in a way that creates value for themselves and for others (Froding, Elander & Eriksson, 2012). The ultimate goal is to have LV residents on the Belief pathway (see Figure 1). The Belief pathway, if taken, is likely to facilitate an enduring and sustainable change, however, the Belief pathway is the most difficult path for a disengaged community member.

To create awareness and an interest for the disengaged or disinterested LV resident, Figure 1 proposes multiple pathways. For instance, linking an already-liked condition to the LV through classical conditioning enables heuristic processing and provides rewards, creates positive feelings, and can facilitate identification, liking and reciprocity (Chaiken et al., 1989; Kolman, 1938; Petty, Cacioppo & Schuman, 1983; Woodside, 2004).

Conclusion

In summary, the model (Figure 1) has multiple pathways to facilitate change and takes into account that individuals are different, some are easily motivated and willing to change, while others will resist change. A limitation is that Figure 1 caters specifically to the LV case, however, there are potential research opportunities and applications of Figure 1 to other isolated/rural communities; fly in/fly out communities; and major new residential developments in which connectivity is either not developed or missing.
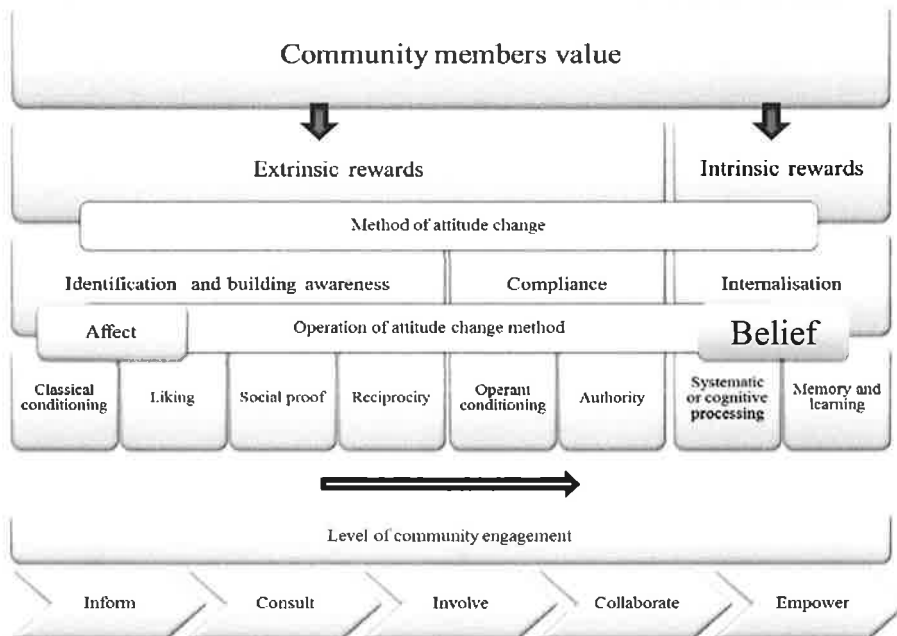
Figure 1: A framework for facilitating behavioural change to build connectivity and develop community engagement

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