Symposium abstract.

**Exploring the question-behavior effect: Examination of effects, mechanisms and moderators**

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**Short Abstract:**  
Leading European and North American researchers working on the Question-Behavior Effect (QBE) present the latest findings in this area. Presentations focus on novel demonstrations of the QBE and insights into mechanisms and moderators of the effect.

**Long Abstract:**  
This symposium brings together leading researchers from Europe and North America who are working on furthering our understanding of the question-behavior effect. The question-behavior effect (QBE) refers to the phenomenon whereby asking questions about a behaviour increased the likelihood that respondents will subsequently perform that behavior. For example, various studies show that asking people questions about their intentions in relation to a target behaviour increases rates of behavioral performance. An increasing number of studies have tested the QBE, although only in the last few years have the mechanisms and moderators of such effects begun to be systematically explored. In the first paper Sheeran presents data on the QBE of measuring goal intentions versus implementation intentions. In the second paper Conner and Sandberg present data on the impact of supplementing goal intention measures with measures of anticipated regret. In the third paper Morwitz and colleagues present data on the moderating role of personal norms on QBE for measures of behavioral prediction. In the fourth paper van Kerckhove present data from several studies to support an intention superiority explanation of the QBE. In the fifth paper Dholakia reviews the differences between laboratory and field tests of the QBE and presents studies that highlight the mechanisms of the QBE. Together these presentations provide a number of insights into the QBE including mechanisms and moderators.

**Keywords:**  
Question-behavior effect, intentions, attitudes, implementation intentions, habits
Abstract 1.

**Which survey questions change behavior? Randomized controlled trial of question-behavior interventions**

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**Short Abstract:**

This study manipulated the type of intention and anticipated regret, and assessed effects on blood donation over one year. Findings showed that questions about implementation intentions but not behavioral intentions increased donation behavior.

**Long Abstract:**

This study investigated which survey questions optimize the impact of question-behavior effects. In particular, we tested the impact of type of intention question (behavioral intention vs. implementation intention) and questions concerning anticipated regret (present vs. absent) in promoting blood donation. Novice blood donors \( N = 4391 \) were randomly allocated to four conditions that varied the content of a questionnaire about blood donation (behavioral intention-only, behavioral intention plus regret, implementation intention-only, implementation intention plus regret) or to a no-questionnaire control condition. Objective measures of donation behavior were obtained at 6 and 12 months post-baseline. Intention-to-treat analyses indicated that participants in the implementation intention-only condition donated more frequently at 6 months compared to participants in the behavioral intention and control conditions. At 12 months both implementation intention conditions outperformed the other conditions. Implementation intentions engendered a 12% increase in donations over one year. Measuring anticipated regret did not augment the impact of interventions whereas questionnaire completion had an important impact on donation behavior. These findings indicate that measuring behavioral intentions does not always promote behavioral performance. When low response rates or weak behavioral intentions are anticipated, then questions about implementation intentions may be more effective.

Keywords:

Question-behavior effect, behavioral intentions, implementation intentions, anticipated regret
Abstract 2.

**Question-behavior effects for anticipated regret plus intention questions**

Mark Conner and Tracy Sandberg

Leeds University, UK

**Short Abstract:**

Study 1 on cervical screening demonstrates that a Question-Behavior Effect for intentions is increased when also measuring anticipated regret. Study 2 on exercise shows this effect to occur only when regret questions precede intention questions.

**Long Abstract:**

The question-behavior effect (QBE) refers to the fact that measurement of cognitions (particularly intentions) can lead to behavior change. Here we tested QBE for intentions plus anticipated regret. Study 1 examined QBE in relation to cervical screening in 4,277 women. Objective attendance was significantly higher when the questionnaire contained anticipated regret questions followed by intention questions than when regret questions were omitted. This effect was moderated by intentions with a significant difference only apparent among strong intenders. In study 2 576 students were randomly allocated to complete one of three questionnaires in relation to exercise: 1) Intention questions only; 2) Intention questions followed by anticipated regret questions; 3) Anticipated regret questions followed by intention questions. Use of the sports center 4-5 weeks later was measured based on objective records. Hierarchical regression analyses indicated no effect of measuring anticipated regret compared to only measuring intentions, but a significant effect of measuring anticipated regret first compared to the other two conditions on sports center use. This effect persisted after controlling for past behavior. The effect was moderated by intention strength but not past behavior. The studies suggest that measuring anticipated regret before measuring goal intentions increases the QBE effect.

**Keywords:**

Question-behavior effect, behavioral intentions, anticipated regret
Abstract 3.

The Interplay of Behavior Prediction and Personal Norms

Pierre Chandon (INSEAD)
Vicki G. Morwitz (Stern School of Business, New York University)
Ronn J. Smith (Sam M. Walton College of Business, University of Arkansas)
Eric R. Spangenberg (College of Business, Washington State University)
David E. Sprott (College of Business, Washington State University)

Short Abstract:
Does being asked about future behavior change whether people repeat their past behavior? We find behavior prediction strengthens behavior repetition when personal norms about the behavior are weak, but disrupts it when personal norms are strong.

Long Abstract:
The repetition of unhealthy sedentary behaviors such as watching tv—and the lack of repetition of healthy behaviors such as exercising—are both leading contributors to preventable deaths. Unfortunately, such repetitive behaviors are difficult to change. So what can be done to strengthen or disrupt behavior repetition? Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of a simple intervention for behavior change: asking people to predict whether they will engage in a behavior. Studies have shown large effects of behavior prediction on desirable and undesirable behaviors, but have not examined whether it influences behavior repetition. Since behavior prediction requests occur frequently in commercial surveys and for screening purposes in prevention programs, it is important to know whether these requests influence behavior repetition and if so how. In two laboratory and two field experiments we find behavior prediction strengthens behavior repetition, making people more likely to do what they normally do, when personal norms regarding engaging in a behavior are weak or inaccessible. When personal norms are strong or accessible, behavior prediction weakens behavior repetition and instead increases the likelihood that people do what they think they should do. These findings provide new tools for influencing behavior repetition, reconcile some seemingly contradictory past findings, and contribute to the debate regarding relative importance of habits and intentions in guiding behavior.

Keywords:
Question-behavior effect, habits, intentions, personal norms
Abstract 4.

**Intention Superiority as a Mechanism of the Question-Behavior Effect**

Anneleen Van Kerckhove, Maggie Geuens, and Iris Vermeir
University of Gent

**Short Abstract:** (250 characters)

Relying on dynamic processes that characterize intention-related concepts in memory, we propose an intention superiority account for the question-behavior effect. We show the action of these processes and how they uniquely affect subsequent behavior.

**Long Abstract:** (1500 characters)

The question-behavior effect is about the influence of answering an intention question on subsequent behavior. The present paper outlines a theory that sheds another light on the processes underlying the question-behavior effect. Generally, the occurrence of the effect has been attributed to an increase in attitude accessibility, response fluency or cognitive dissonance. This paper proposes an explanation based on 'intention-superiority'. Relying on the dynamic processes that characterize intention-related information in memory, two studies show that a brand tied to an intention remains in a heightened state of activation until choice, after which it becomes inhibited. Competitive brands that are distracting from intention completion are inhibited prior to the completion of the intention. These changes in brand activation drive the question-behavior effect. A third study shows that intention superiority can explain findings that cannot be accounted for by traditional theoretical accounts, such as decreased choice of the preferred brand when consumers make two subsequent choices. Additionally, we demonstrate that the question-behavior and the accompanying changes in brand accessibilities do not operate in isolation from consumer motivations. When the target behavior referred to in the intention question opposes an active consumer goal no question-behavior effect and accompanying changes in the cognitive set-up occur.

Keywords:

Question-behavior effect, intention superiority, accessibility, motivation
A Consideration of Processes Underlying the Mere Measurement Effect in the Field

Utpal M. Dholakia
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Short Abstract:
Despite recent calls to integrate the Question-Behavior Effect research streams, it is argued that there are fundamental differences in the effect observed in the laboratory and the field. I summarize the key differences, and describe a number of studies conducted to better understand the processes underlying mere measurement effects in the field.

Long Abstract:
Despite recent calls to integrate the Question-Behavior Effect research streams, it is argued that there are fundamental differences in the effect observed in the laboratory and the field. Unlike laboratory studies, field studies of the mere measurement effect (MME) involve firm-sponsored surveys, are done with existing knowledgeable customers of firms over periods spanning months and years, and measure a variety of behaviors. Consequently, the primary mechanism implicated in lab-based MME studies, enhanced accessibility of survey responses, is not sufficient to fully explain all observed field-based effects. In this presentation, a number of studies conducted to examine the processes underlying the field-based MME are described. Evidence is provided for a broader inference-based account of field-based MME effects. Upon responding to a firm-sponsored survey, it is argued that participants may form a variety of inferences such as those regarding the firm’s intentions for conducting the survey and its responsiveness, the quality and level of service received, their own status as a firm’s customer, and the obligations and responsibilities stemming from survey participation. Such inferences have the potential to produce a variety of positive and negative behaviors, which may be consistent with responses given to survey questions in some cases, but be inconsistent in others. The presentation concludes with a consideration of future research opportunities based on these findings.

Keywords:
Question-Behavior Effect, Mere Measurement, Customer Satisfaction, Survey Research