

# Fostering sustainable behaviour through interpretation: a case study of Zoos Victoria

Sue Broad  
Betty Weiler



MONASH University  
Tourism Research Unit



© Sue Broad and Betty Weiler 2005

# Presentation outline

---

- Project rationale: why behaviour?
- Behaviour: what and how?
- Results from Zoos Victoria approach
- What do they tell us (and not tell us)?
- Another approach and what it can tell us



# Project rationale

---

- Zoos need evidence to demonstrate that they are achieving conservation outcomes
- One conservation outcome is behaviour “change” in visitors
- There is a lack of evidence that Zoo visits impact on behaviour



# Behaviour . . .

---

. . . as the phenomenon of interest

- What behaviours are you trying to influence?
- What behaviours can you realistically influence through interpretation?
- How do you influence behaviour?
- How do you measure behaviour?



# What behaviours?

---

The most frequently identified priority behaviours that visitors could undertake while at the zoo, or in partnership with the zoo were:

- 1) donate money or sponsor zoo animals;
- 2) reduce/reuse/recycle while at the zoo; and
- 3) volunteer with the zoo.



# What behaviours?

---

The Zoo would like to influence off-site behaviours ....

- 1) Is this achievable?
- 2) Is it measurable?
- 3) Can you realistically attribute a particular off-site behaviour to the interpretation experienced at the Zoo?



# How do you influence behaviour?

---

## Zoos Victoria Approach

1. Know about threats to animals and their habitats
2. Know that something can be done to alleviate the threats
3. Know what individual actions can be taken



# How do you measure it?

---

## Zoos Victoria Approach

- Percentage of visitors who can recall these things

## What are the results and what do they tell us?



# Trail of the Elephants

---

- 50% recalled seeing or hearing info about the threats to Asian elephants during their visit
- 33% recalled seeing or hearing information about what needs to be done to save Asian elephants
- 39% recalled hearing or seeing information about what actions individuals can take to help save elephants



# Werribee Open Range Zoo

---

- 79% recalled seeing or hearing info about the threats to animals and their habitats during their safari tour
- 54% recalled hearing or seeing information about what actions individuals can take to help save animals and their habitats



# Healesville Sanctuary

---

- 90% recalled seeing or hearing info about the threats to birds of prey and their habitats during a presentation
- 81% recalled hearing or seeing information about what actions individuals can take to help save birds of prey and their habitats



# What do the results tell us?

---

- Even immediately following a visit to the Zoo, most visitors were unable to recall the messages delivered at TOE
- Recall was much higher for personal (face-to-face) interpretation
- Recall was highest when the interpreters were trained in and applied thematic interpretation



# What doesn't it tell us?

---

- Knowledge does not equal behaviour
- What visitors “say” they heard or can recall is not the same as objectively measuring what is being delivered/received/recalled
- Without a control group, we don't know whether visitors receiving different or “no” interpretation (or even non-visitors) would have the same recall



# Another approach

---

- If you are trying to influence behaviour you need to design and deliver interpretation with that specific behaviour in mind
- To do this, you need to know the current BELIEFS of visitors about the behaviour

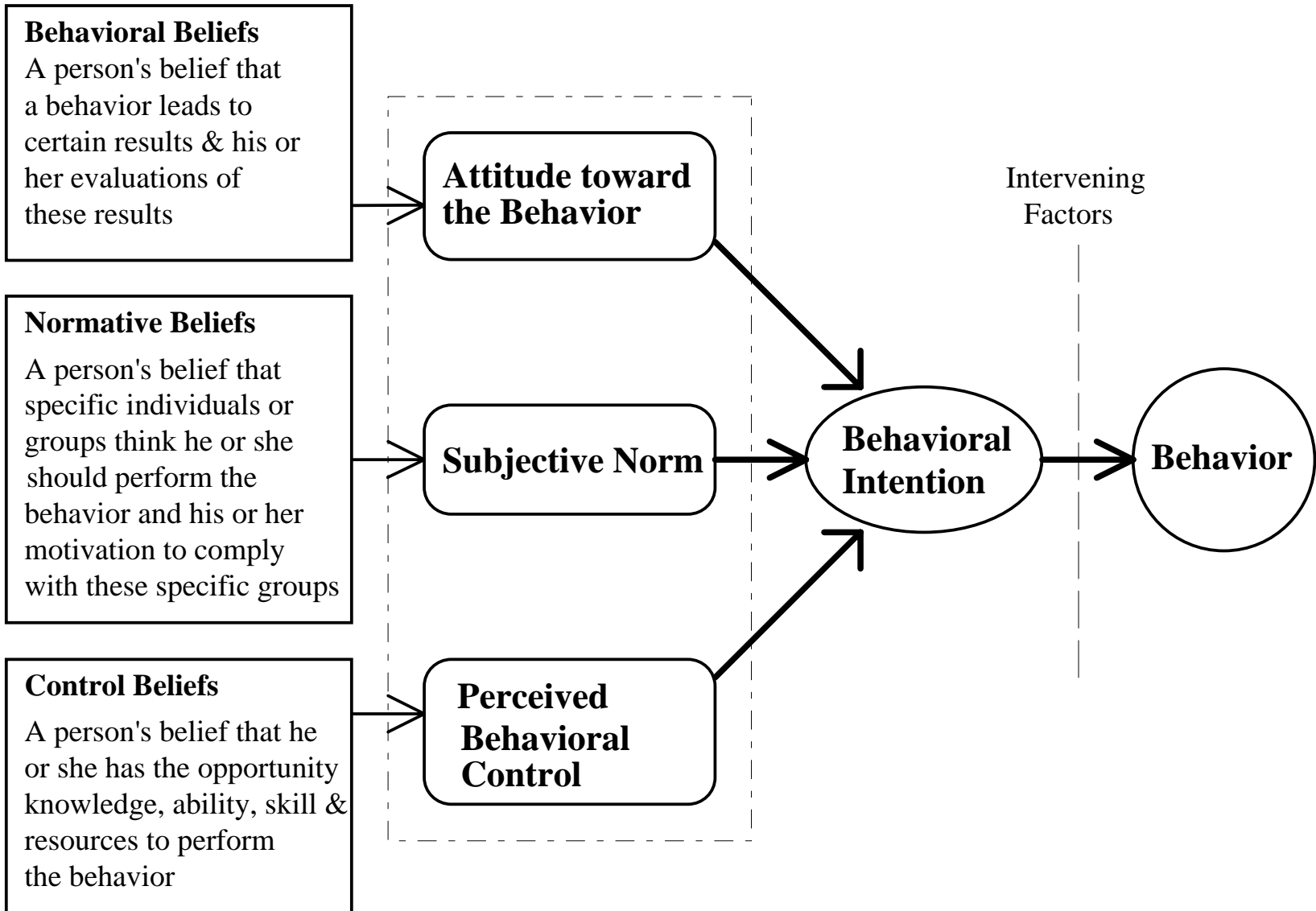


# Another approach

---

- Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)
  - Attitudes and behaviour are a consequence of the underlying beliefs that influence these – you cannot set out to directly “change” attitudes or behaviour
  - Three types of beliefs can influence attitude and intention to act
  - Only by influencing these can you hope to influence behaviour





# Future research

---

- Apply TPB
- Need to be specific about the behaviour –
  - e.g. donating to Wildlife Hospital
- Three phases
  - Identify beliefs
  - Test for strength
  - Target strong beliefs through communication



# What will this approach tell us?

---

- Assessment of impacts of interpretation on attitudes, behavioural intention and behaviour
- Evidence that zoo interpretation contributes to these things and therefore to conservation
- Evaluation of what is achieved with different audiences and approaches to interpretation
- Communication strategies that may be used elsewhere including non-captive wildlife settings



For more information:

[www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/](http://www.buseco.monash.edu.au/units/tru/)

[www.zoo.org.au](http://www.zoo.org.au)



MONASH University  
Tourism Research Unit

