



Evaluating Compliance Messages

Toughness as a moderator for Door-In-The-Face Theory

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Background

- The Door-In-The-Face Theory (DITF), a compliance gaining technique, works through a requester making an initial large request (which is assumed will be denied), followed by a smaller seemingly more reasonable target request after the initial rejection (Cialdini, 1975).
- Feeley et al. (2012) proposed that difficulty or “toughness” of the target request as measured by baseline compliance, may be a moderator for when DITF is successful.

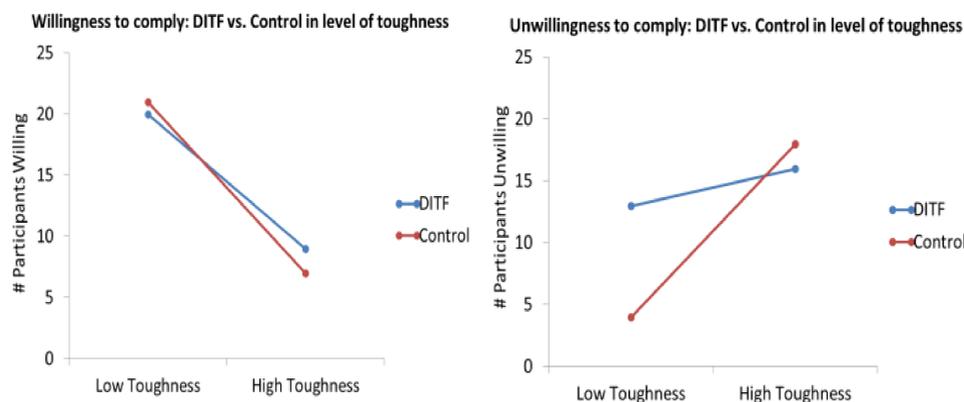
Procedures

- We decided to test if *toughness* could be shown to be a moderator for DITF.
- Using two compliance scenarios from previous DITF research varying on toughness (low & high) we created an online survey to test reactions to these request scenarios.
- 255 participants took our survey which consisted of closed ended and open ended questions that assessed their willingness to comply with a given scenario.
- Participant’s open responses to the scenarios were coded, collapsed and used for our analysis.



Findings

- Data from open ended responses supported toughness as a moderator for when DITF is successful in gaining compliance.
- Participants exposed to the high toughness scenario in the DITF condition were more willing to comply with the request compared to those in a low toughness scenario.
- When the scenario was easier to comply with (low toughness) participants in the control condition were more willing to comply than in DITF condition. This phenomenon is called a “boomerang effect”, meaning that attempts to use DITF in easy request scenarios actually backfires, supporting previous research (Feeley et al., 2012).



These graphs (above) depict the number of open responses (y-axis) of “Willingness to comply” vs. “Unwillingness to comply” when asked to submit thoughts or reactions to the scenario they had read. The figures show that DITF is more successful in gaining willingness to comply with “High Toughness” scenarios vs. “Low Toughness”

Implications

- Use of DITF in compliance contexts that ordinarily yield high compliance or “low toughness” scenarios is not recommended.
- DITF increases verbal compliance in an online setting in addition to a traditional face-to-face setting.
- A comprehensive theory as to why DITF works has yet to be explicated in the literature.
- Future research should identify why DITF works better in more difficult request contexts.

References

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