

Southern Alberta Resource Economics Centre

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Determining the Decision Making Process

for Social Issue Behaviours:

Inputs to Formulating Social Marketing Strategy

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Southern Alberta Resource Economics Centre Publications

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Abstract

While determining a social marketing strategy, it is critical to conduct formative research in the initial stages. In formative research, the primary objective is to understand the individual whose behavior we intend to change. What are the drivers of their behaviours? What psychological and environmental benefits do they seek and what barriers do they face while carrying out the social issue behaviours?

The following research study will answer a few formative research questions that will allow us to formulate and conduct a robust social marketing strategy and campaign. This exploratory investigation will identify the drivers and barriers leading to the successful implementation of water transfer programs within communities divided by opposing beliefs relating to water and land management. Specifically, it will document the irrigators' stories regarding the factors that influenced their voting decision in the 2007 water rights agreement between Balzac and the Western Irrigation District. Personal interviews, employing Narrative Inquiry, will be conducted to document the participant's interpretations. Puto's (1987) conceptual model of the buying decision framing process and Rothschild's (1999) conceptual model for the management of public health and social issue behaviors will be used to formulate the Lafreniere-Deshpande model and the initial questions. The interview transcripts will then be analyzed in order to test and expand the Lafreniere-Deshpande model as well as determine the difference between those who voted for and against the agreement. This understanding may assist other social movements regarding the decision making process that affect a target's choice to accept or reject a desired social issue behavior.

Determining the Decision Making Process for Social Issue Behaviours: Inputs to Formulating Social Marketing Strategy

Role of Formative Research

Social marketing is a powerful technique to influence individual behavior. This technique has been applied in a variety of settings to influence diverse profile of individuals in many cultures. Few examples include promotion of contraceptives among reproductive age couples in Asia and Africa to reduce family size, promotion of healthy diet in North America, promotion of alternative rides among young adult men in North America to reduce driving after drinking, and so on. While the emphasis is on public health, social marketing is increasingly being used to promote ecology-friendly behaviors such as recycling, public transit use, and water conservation.

Foundation of a good social marketing campaign is a sound strategy that positively influences individual behavior. The essence of a social marketing strategy is to understand the audience member. Social marketers carry out the task of understanding the audiences at the formative research stage. Quality of insights collected at the formative research stage can make or break a campaign. The following research study attempts to understand the farmers who voted on the Balzac water transfer rights agreement. The findings will help us to create effective social marketing strategy.

Problem Statement

As economic activity and population growth increases, water licenses for the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) are now fully allocated with the effect that no new licenses are likely to be issued. As such, the people and industries within the Basin are therefore in a situation where they have to make do with what they have (Bjornlund et al., 2008). In September, 2007, Alberta Environment approved the agreement where the municipality of

Rocky View agreed to pay the Western Irrigation District (WID) \$15 million to convert a leaky canal into an efficient pipeline in exchange for 2,000 acre feet of water. At \$7,500 an acre-foot, this set a new Alberta water market record (Nicol, 2007). This water transfer created substantial opposition from many parties - urban users, environmental interest groups as well as some farmers within the WID that eventually provided water to the development -- demonstrating the need for better marketing tools to promote such transfers within all sectors of the community in such a way that all parties can accept them as win-win or at least reasonable solutions (Nicol, 2007).

Previous social marketing campaigns in favor of water transfer programs have focused primarily on socialization tactics such as financial incentives and education (Maybery, Cras, & Gullifer, 2005). However, little is known about the decision making process that determined the choice to accept or reject the water transfer agreement. Moreover, the differences between those who voted for the 2007 agreement and those who voted against have not yet been examined. In light of the current social issue, this thesis will examine the irrigators' opinions regarding the factors that influenced their voting decision in the 2007 water rights agreement between Balzac and the WID.

Decisions vary with the nature of the decision environment. In decision making research, the context and its impact on the decision process is considered a fundamental issue (e.g. Puto, 1987). In Prospect Theory, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) have shown that decision frames are not only reliable predictors of choice in different contexts but also in situations involving risk. This theory implies that "framing effects" influence the intentions of decision makers to adopt a desired behavior. However, little is known about the decision making process for water transfer

decisions. Furthermore, the framing effects in water transfer problems have not yet been examined.

Rothschild's (1999) conceptual framework for the management of social issue behavior considers the meta factors affecting the decision making process. Specifically, targets that are prone, resistant, or unable to respond to the manager's goals behave on the basis of their motivation, opportunity, and ability and on the manager's use of the strategies and tactics inherent in education, marketing and law. Although Rothschild's (1999) framework has been widely referenced and accepted over the last ten years, it has been neither tested in real life nor extended from a decision framing perspective. As a result, this framework has never been applied in a water transfer context.

From a theoretical perspective, this study will therefore contribute to the existing social issue and decision making literature in at least three unique ways. First, both Rothschild's (1999) conceptual framework and Puto's (1987) decision framing process model will be tested in the context of the 2007 water transfer agreement between the Western Irrigation District and the MD of Rocky View. Due to the complexity of the water agreement, these frameworks can therefore be considerably developed for their theoretical robustness.

Second, this is the first study to merge together Rothschild's (1999) and Puto's (1987) frameworks. This merger will be completed by proposing a new decision framing model called the Lafreniere-Deshpande model. Although both frameworks are widely accepted and referenced in the decision making literature, they hypothesize the outcome of the decision process using two very distinct process models. Therefore, this study will contribute to the decision making

literature by improving the ability to explain the decision making process for social issue behaviors.

Finally, this study will adopt a qualitative approach, employing Narrative Inquiry to document the irrigator's interpretations. Most studies (e.g. Fiegenbaum & Thomas, 1988; Kühberger, 1998; Qualls & Puto, 1989) analyzed decision framing from a quantitative perspective. However, qualitative business research can provide a critical and reflexive view about the social world of business and its core processes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This method will not only considerably develop the conceptual frameworks at hand, but also gain a deeper understanding of the decision making phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data (Silverman, 2001). Therefore, this study has the opportunity to discover new information about decision making and social change that was never been considered before.

The purpose of this narrative research is to describe the decision making process for the irrigators who voted on the 2007 water rights agreement between Balzac and the Western Irrigation District. Thus, from a practical perspective, the outcome from this research will assist in counseling planners of future social marketing campaigns regarding approaches to change behavior, actions or beliefs. At this stage in the research, the decision making process will reflect on the decision framing and social change literature. This perspective will not only provide a practical contribution for a current social issue in Canadian and international contexts but also provide theoretical contributions in the decision making and social issue literature (Kühberger, 1998). This proposal begins by a review of the literature on the decision making process and social issues behavior. This review is followed by a discussion of the research question. The methodology section outlines how the research question will be answered. Finally, a timeline and budget is discussed.

Literature Review

Water Transfer Agreements

Several Canadian and international communities have exhausted their current water supply. In order to resolve this crisis, researchers have considered water management strategies such as transferring water licenses (Bjornlund, et al., 2008) and adopting improved irrigation technology (Nicol, Bjornlund, & Klein, 2008). However, numerous attempts to implement these solutions have been resisted by the seemingly unpredictable responses of the irrigation sector. Irrigation is the largest consumer of water in southern Alberta. As such, the success of any water management policy primarily depends on the participation of this sector (Bjornlund, Nicol, & Klein, 2007).

In the past, research studies on decision making in the irrigation sector had the perception that irrigators were homogeneous in nature and primarily driven by financial incentives. However, these studies have failed to adequately explain and predict the irrigator's reaction to water problems, resulting in an inadequate acceptance of proposed water solutions (Maybery, et al., 2005). Instead, the irrigators' reactions show that the water issue is laden with emotion and that the research needs to be approached with tact and discretion (Kuehne & Bjornlund, 2006). Maybery et al. (2005) argue that this limitation occurs because the studies failed to appreciate the diversity and complexity of triggers that motivate decisions in agriculture.

More recently, studies have demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of the irrigation sector by classifying irrigators according to their behavior (e.g. Kuehne & Bjornlund, 2006; Maybery, et al., 2005). This technique may help policy makers more accurately target irrigators when planning for significant changes (Kuehne & Bjornlund, 2006). Maybery, et al. (2005)

recognized the value of the strategies and tactics inherent in marketing and psychology in order to determine and target the distinctive features of the irrigators. Overall, irrigator responses are influenced by not only financial incentives but also: risk, leisure time, management complexity (Gómez-Limón & Riesgo, 2004), local production conditions, output and input prices, and individual characteristics of the irrigator, such as goals, debt situations and family situations (Bjornlund, et al., 2007). However, the decision making process of the irrigators has not been examined until now.

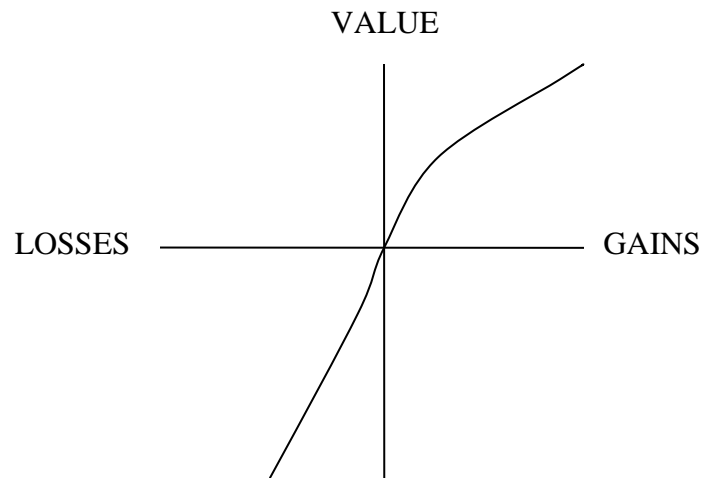
Decision Framing

Since the decision making process is closely tied to Prospect Theory, it is appropriate to provide an overview of that theory and its role in decision making. Prospect Theory was developed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979) as an alternative model to expected utility theory to describe decision making under risk. Unlike the expected utility theory, prospect theory accounts for context effects on decision making by means of the decision frame. “The frame that a decision maker adopts is controlled partly by the formulation of the problem and partly by the norms, habits and personal characteristics of the decision maker” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981, p. 453). As a consequence, the attractiveness of decision alternatives varies with the nature of the decision frame. This phenomenon is based on the argument that people do not always make rational decisions based on absolute value. Instead, people make decisions based on how the problem is framed. More specifically, alternatives are selected or rejected based on their perceived position relative to a reference point.

A reference point refers to the asset position that one is expected to attain. The term asset includes not only monetary value but also practical aspects in everyday life such as lifestyle

preferences (Kühberger, 1998). A negative decision frame is when a set of alternatives are below a reference point and perceived as possible losses. A positive decision frame is when a set of alternatives are above a reference point and perceived as possible gains. In a negative decision frame, people are more risk-seeking to avoid their possible losses. In a positive decision frame, people are more risk-averse to ensure their gains. This phenomenon is referred to as the *framing effect* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Kahneman and Tversky (1979) observed two additional features of the framing effect (Figure 1). First, potential gains above the reference point are concave and potential losses below the reference point are convex. Said another way, greater gains and losses do not appear so big at bigger values. For example, the difference in value between a gain of \$100 and a gain of \$200 appears to be greater than the difference between a gain of \$1,100 and a gain of \$1,200. Conversely, the difference between a loss of \$100 and a loss of \$200 appears greater than the difference between a loss of \$1,100 and a loss of \$1,200 (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, p. 278). The second feature is that the value function for losses is steeper than the value function of gains (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, p. 279). For example, the aggravation of losing money is greater than the pleasure of gaining money.



*Figure 1. A Hypothetical Value Function. Reprinted from " Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky, 1987, *Econometrica*, 47(2), p. 279. Copyright 1987 by *Econometrica*.*

A meta analysis conducted by Kühberger (1998) further establishes the framing effect. The framing effect is most effective when manipulating the probability of a future risky event opposed to the attitude of a current situation. It is also more effective when comparing risky/riskless alternatives rather than alternatives that vary in degree of risk. Kühberger (1998, p. 43) proposes that this result occurred because it is hard to determine what constitutes as the more or less risky option for a given individual. With respect to the generalizability of the framing effect, both individuals and groups are shown to be influenced. In addition, no one is found to be immune to the framing effect whether they are students or experts.

In the context of industrial buyers, Puto (1987) expands prospect theory to include a conceptual model of the buying decision framing process. This framework (Figure 2) proposes factors, rooted in perception and judgment, which change the position of the reference point. The

model conceptualizes that people approach a purchase with a set of expectations about the performance of the item being purchased and a set of specific buying objectives. This information serves as the initial reference point (Puto, 1987, p. 303). The position of the initial reference point is then subject to change as additional information becomes available until, immediately prior to making a decision, it becomes the final reference point (Puto, 1987, p. 303). In the industrial buying context, additional information includes the sales message, justification and the reward environment (Puto, 1987, p. 304).

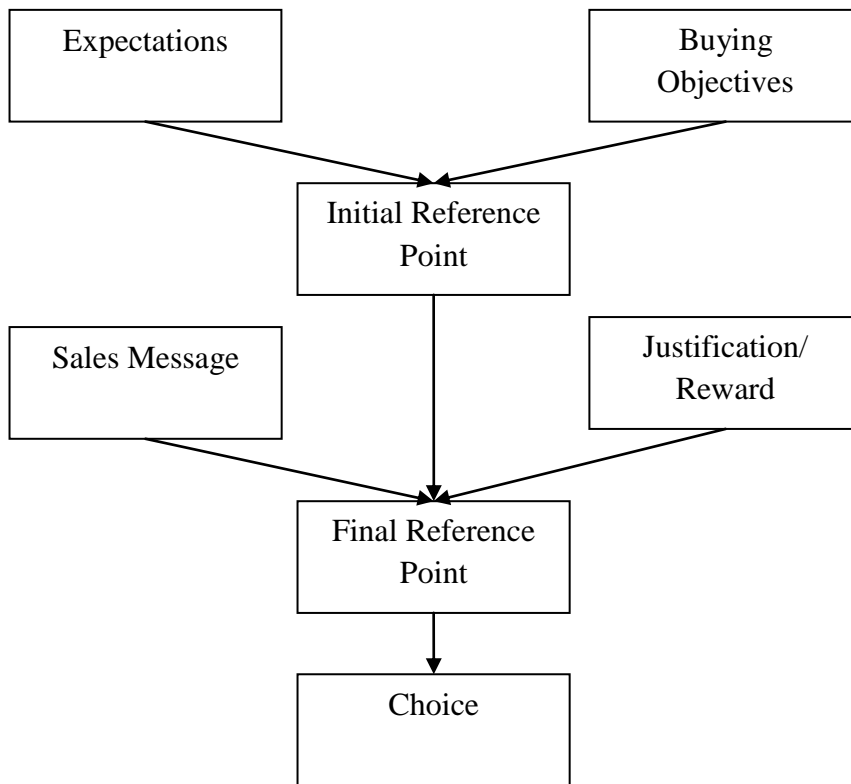


Figure 2. Proposed Conceptual Model of the Buying Decision Framing Process.

Reprinted from "The Framing of Buying Decisions," by C.P. Puto, 1987, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(3), p. 303. Copyright 1987 by the Journal of Consumer

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reference point is the ultimate influence on the selection of an alternative. However, Puto's

model was tested in the limited context of the industrial buyer and excluded the existence of other factors that may influence the decision framing process. As such, this experiment does not account for other contexts beyond industrial buyer decisions (Puto, 1987). Nonetheless, this study provides an interesting twist on traditional decision making process models that often conclude inconsistent relationships among the factors that influence corporate decisions. That is, incorporating the factors from traditional decision making process models into the decision framing process provides an enhanced understanding of the decision making process.

According to this literature, the decision making process can be described by the position of the reference point and by the factors that change the position of the reference point. This notion provides two strategies for marketers to influence individual decisions. The first approach is to influence the formation of the reference point. However, if the reference point is strongly committed to its current position, then the second approach is to change the perceived characteristics of the desired alternative in a manner consistent with the decision frame (Qualls & Puto, 1989). These strategies must be kept in mind throughout the following section in order to determine how marketers can use the decision framing phenomena to influence social issue decisions. The following section will examine the factors in Rothschild's (1999) conceptual framework on the management of social issue behavior.

Social Issue Behaviors

Unlike Puto's (1987) decision framing process model, Rothschild's (1999) conceptual framework on the management of social issue behavior considers the context of social issues.

Since Rothschild's framework is closely related to MOA theory (motivation, opportunity and ability), it is appropriate to first provide an overview of that theory and its role in decision making. MOA theory was developed by MacInnis, Moorman, and Jaworski (1991) in order to explain the relationship between advertising executional cues and viewer information processing.

According to MacInnis, et al. (1991), communication outcomes are influenced by the extent of brand information processing from ads. Information processing is in turn influenced by the consumers' level of motivation (i.e. goal-directed arousal), opportunity (i.e. level of distractions or exposure time), and ability (i.e. skills or proficiencies in interpreting brand information). Though motivation, opportunity and ability are present prior to ad exposure, their levels can be enhanced by ad design strategies (MacInnis, et al., 1991, p. 33). Thus, a consumers' level of MOA mediates the relationship between ad design strategies and communication outcomes (MacInnis, et al., 1991). Marketers can improve communication outcomes by (1) matching ad design strategies to the consumers' existing MOA levels or (2) by enhancing the consumers' MOA levels to process information from an advertisement (MacInnis, et al., 1991, p. 32).

Rothschild (1999) expands MOA theory by incorporating it in the public health and social issue context. When one or more of the set of MOA are lacking, the decision maker is resistant or unable to act in a manner that solves the social issue (Rothschild, 1999). However, the strategies and tactics inherent in education, marketing and law can be developed to match existing levels of MOA or enhance the probability in achieving future desired levels of MOA (Figure 3). The combination of the presence or absence of MOA determines which behavior strategy tool can be superior at achieving the manager's goals of obtaining appropriate behavior from a variety of decision makers. Thus, public health and social issue behavior can be

influenced by the target's current level of MOA and on the manager's use of behavior strategies (Rothschild, 1999).

Motivation	Yes		No	
Opportunity	Yes	No	Yes	No
Ability	Prone to behave	Unable to behave	Resistant to behave	Resistant to behave
Yes	<i>education</i>	<i>marketing</i>	<i>law</i>	<i>marketing, law</i>
No	Unable to behave	Unable to behave	Resistant to behave	Resistant to behave
	<i>education, marketing</i>	<i>education, marketing</i>	<i>education, marketing, law</i>	<i>education, marketing, law</i>

Figure 3. Applications of Education, Marketing, and Law. Reprinted from "Carrots, Sticks, and Promises: A Conceptual Framework for the Management of Public Health and Social Issue Behaviors," by M. L. Rothschild, 1999, *Journal of Marketing*, 63(4), p. 31. Copyright 1999 by the Journal of Marketing

In the social issue context, ability refers to the target's skills or proficiencies in carrying out the desired behavior. Higher expectancies of personal achievement show greater abilities. However, dominant competitors can impede ability (Rothschild, 1999). For example, consider the case in which peer pressure to binge drink is so great that students need some outside force to prohibit them from behaving, so they do not lose face with their peers. Ability can be enhanced when the target is forced to do the right thing (Rothschild, 1999). In this situation, decision makers must be able to comprehend that the prospective alternative solves their problem of potentially losing face with their peers.

There is a lack of opportunity when the target wants to act but is unable to do so because there are no environmental mechanisms available (Rothschild, 1999, p. 31). Environmental mechanisms may be, for example, alternative forms of recreation to compete with binge

drinking. Decision makers must perceive the environmental mechanisms and assess its appropriateness in solving their social issue.

Motivation refers to the goal-directed arousal. Decision makers must recognize that their self interests will be served (Rothschild, 1999). For many social issues, there is no natural motivation to comply with societal goals because decision makers do not perceive that their self interests are considered (Rothschild, 1999, p. 31). For example, people who refuse to vote because they think that their vote does not matter.

The Decision Making Process for Social Issue Behavior

Both Puto (1987) and Rothschild (1999) propose that decision makers approach a decision with preexisting perceptions based on past and present information and experience. The initial reference point is posited to be a function of that information and experience (Puto, 1987). Puto (1987) conceptualizes this information as buying objectives and expectations. However, Puto (1987, p. 312) does not account for many factors that go into the decision making process. On the other hand, Rothschild's (1999) existing levels of MOA are well referenced and cited in the literature as perceptions that influence decisions. Thus in the Lafreniere-Deshpande model (Figure 4), it is reasonable to consider the initial reference point as a reflection of MOA.

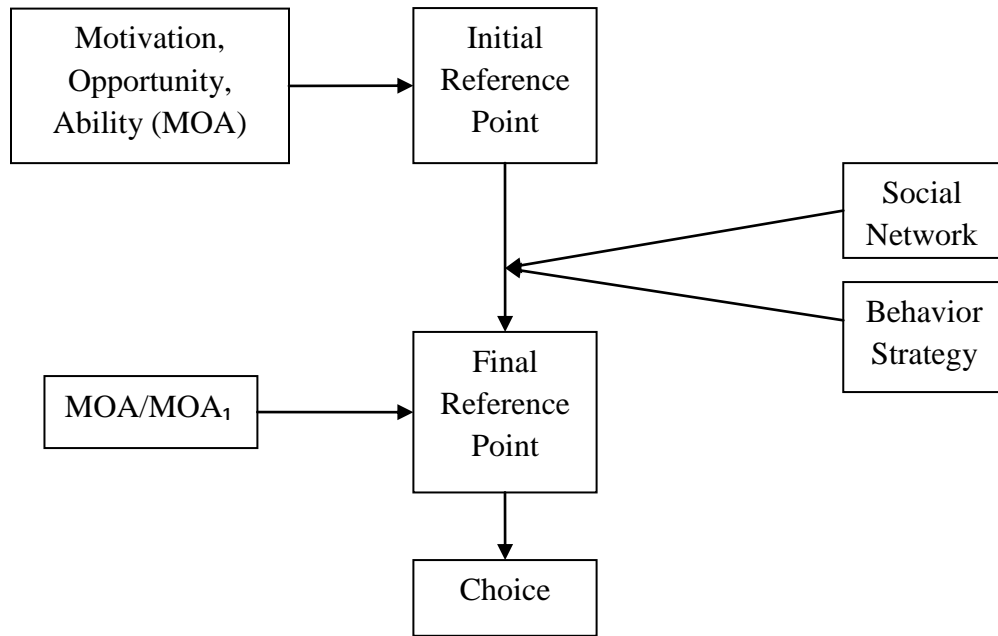


Figure 4. Lafreniere-Deshpande Model of the Decision Making Process for Social Issue Behaviors

The initial reference point becomes the final reference point unless environmental factors present in the decision maker’s environment at the time of the decision exert sufficient influence to shift it to a new position (Puto, 1987, p. 305). When the decision maker’s environment influences the position of the reference point, they are also influencing the existing levels of MOA into new positions, hereinafter referred to as MOA₁. However, the decision maker’s environment may only influence the initial reference point and MOA if the decision maker is not strongly committed to its position (Puto, 1987). Puto (1987, p.304) indicates that, “The stronger the decision maker’s commitment to the initial reference point, the less likely it is to change”.

Puto (1987) and Rothschild (1999) also propose that a decision may be influenced by additional information that becomes available before a choice is made. In the social issue context, sales is not the only way to communicate a message (Kotler & Lee, 2008).

Consequently, Puto’s (1987) sales message can be extended into the three behavioral strategies

used to impose society's interests on individuals: education, marketing and law. As proposed by Rothschild (1999), the manager's use of the strategies and tactics inherent in education, marketing and law can be developed to match existing levels of MOA or change MOA into future desired levels of MOA₁. It must be noted that the combination of the presence or absence of MOA determines which behavior strategy tool (education, marketing and/or law) can be superior at achieving the manager's goals of obtaining appropriate behavior from a variety of decision makers (Rothschild, 1999). Therefore, the most appropriate behavior strategy tool must be selected (Figure 3) in order to influence the final reference point.

Many researchers have argued that additional information may also come from the decision maker's social network (e.g. Frambach & Schillewaert, 2002; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Waarts, van Everdingen, & van Hillegersberg, 2002). Members of the decision makers' social network may include their peers and other related stakeholders such as environmentalists, policy makers, community members, etc. The social network provides additional information to the decision maker through their interactions. Thus, additional information may come from both interventions and social networks (Figure 4).

In the Lafreniere-Deshpande model, the final reference point is influenced by the initial reference point (Puto, 1987), the behavior strategy (Rothschild, 1999) and the social network. When prospective decisions are compared to the final reference point, they will be framed as losses or gains depending on the position of the decision frame (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). A negative decision frame is comparable to a situation when one or more of the set of MOA are lacking. Consider, for example, a decision maker who decided to go fishing with friends even though he or she does not have a fishing license. Although the other alternatives (buy a license or not go fishing) are less risky, they do not avoid the possible losses because the decision maker

would lose the opportunity to go fishing with friends. Thus, the decision maker's alternatives are negatively framed and consequently, the choice is more risk-seeking. In MOA (Rothschild, 1999), it can be seen that opportunity may be lacking because the decision maker does not perceive the environmental mechanisms (e.g. a fishing license) as available to make the socially responsible decision. Thus, in the Lafreniere-Deshpande model, a negative decision frame is a reflection of a situation when one or more of the set of MOA are lacking.

Likewise, a positive decision frame is comparable to a situation when the levels of MOA are high. When the levels of MOA are high, decision makers are prone to behave because it is easy for the decision maker to discern that their self interests will be served or it is easy for the manager to convey this point (Rothschild, 1999). It is reasonable to assume that when decision makers are prone to behave, they are comfortable with their decision environment and consequently perceive their alternatives through a positive decision frame.

The relationship between the final reference point and choice is well established in prospect theory (Puto, 1987). As mentioned above, Kahneman and Tversky (1979) posit that choices among gains will tend to be risk-averse and choices among losses will tend to be risk-taking. If none of the decision alternatives are acceptable, the decision maker can either seek more alternatives or modify their reference point (Qualls & Puto, 1989).

The Lafreniere-Deshpande model posits four different situations that may occur (Table 1). The first situation describes decision makers that are strongly committed to the initial reference point and the existing levels of MOA. For example, consider an aboriginal person who smokes tobacco as a spiritual ritual. They may have a strong commitment to their initial

reference point and are therefore less likely to change their reference point and consequential choice, regardless of imposing factors in the decision maker’s environment.

Table 1

Summary of Possible Situations in the Decision Making Process for Social Issue Behaviors

Situation	Commitment	Behavior Strategy	Social Network
1	Strong	No Influence <i>Match MOA</i>	No Influence
2	Weak	Influence <i>Modify MOA</i>	No Influence
3	Weak	No Influence <i>Target Social Network</i>	Influence
4	Weak	Influence <i>Modify MOA/ Target Social Network</i>	Influence

The three other situations describe decision makers that are weakly committed to the initial reference point and existing levels of MOA. In the second situation, the appropriate behavior strategy (education, marketing, or law) may influence the final reference point, but not the social network. In the third situation, the social network may influence the final reference point, but not the appropriate behavior strategy. Finally, in the fourth situation, both the appropriate behavior strategy and the social network may influence the final reference point.

It is important to understand how reference points are formed in order to know how to change its position or how the decision alternatives are perceived (Qualls & Puto, 1989). In the social issue context, these theories provide two strategies for marketers to influence the decision making process. Rothschild (1999) posits that strategies can be developed to match existing levels of MOA or enhance the probability of achieving future desired levels of MOA. Thus, the first approach is to create an alternative consistent with the current levels of MOA and initial reference point (when there is strong commitment to the initial reference point), which in turn

increases the possibility of the decision maker adhering the marketer's objectives. If there is a weak commitment to the initial reference point, the second approach is to change the decision makers' perceived level of MOA and the final reference point in a manner consistent with the marketer's objectives through a behavior strategy. However, if the social network possesses more power to influence the final reference point, then a behavior strategy may have more influence on the decision maker if it is targeting the social network rather than the decision maker.

The Lafreniere-Deshpande model contributes to the decision making literature because it allows us to better explain the process and influencers of decision making. Although Rothschild's (1999) model provides a framework for managing social issue behavior, it does not account for the reference point and risk. Additionally, although Puto's (1987) model describes the decision framing process, it does not account for many established factors involved in decision making. The Lafreniere-Deshpande model fills these theoretical gaps and improves the ability to explain the decision making process for social issue behavior.

Research Questions

In communities that have exhausted their current water supply, people are faced with the decision whether to transfer some of their water rights or not. However, this problem creates substantial opposition from many parties. In the Balzac case, the plebiscite among its members (irrigators) was approved by a fairly low margin. There is very little known about why the water transfer agreement created considerable opposition and how to convince these decision makers, or effectively communicate the message to them, that water transfer programs are in effect, win-win or at least acceptable solutions. I plan on filling in this gap in the literature.

In the social issue behavior literature, targets that are prone, resistant, or unable to respond to the manager's goals behave on the basis of their motivation, opportunity, and ability. Manager's should understand these background conditions of the decision maker and accordingly use strategies and tactics inherent in education, marketing or law (Rothschild, 1999). However, in the decision framing literature, the framing effects influence the intentions of decision makers to adopt a desired behavior (Puto, 1987). Therefore, my research questions are:

1. How does the Lafreniere-Deshpande model explain the structure of the decision framing process and subsequently choice?
2. How do the concepts of the Lafreniere-Deshpande model explain the decision making process of the irrigators who voted in the 2007 water transfer agreement and are there other concepts that may play a role in the decision making process?
3. How does the decision making process of irrigators who voted for the agreement differ from farmers who voted against the agreement?

Research Method

Incorporating the decision framing process model into the management of social issues behavior framework may lead to a more effective description of the decision making process. Although this theoretical framework can be quantitatively tested, this study will adopt a qualitative approach, employing narrative research, because of the limitations of both theories. Specifically, decision framing has never been applied in the water transfer problem. Additionally, Rothschild's (1999) framework has never been tested in real life. Therefore, the qualitative realm will provide an opportunity to focus on the complexity of the water issue and to significantly develop the conceptual frameworks at hand. Such an approach allows for the emergence of multiple themes created by the participants themselves (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 219). It can provide a critical and reflexive view about the social world of business and its core processes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). This method can not only considerably develop the conceptual frameworks at hand, but also gain a deeper understanding of the decision making phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data (Silverman, 2001).

In a broad sense, narrative research is the study of stories (Polkinghorne, 2007). It is undertaken by various academic disciplines including literary criticism, history, philosophy, organizational theory and social sciences (Polkinghorne, 2007). An important justification for doing narrative research is the belief that people are storytellers because telling and sharing stories help people understand themselves and connect to each other (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 211). Furthermore, compared to non-narrative texts, stories are richer and thicker, more compelling and easily memorable (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Thus, narrative research

permits an innate understanding of the decision making process and facilitates the exploratory nature of the study.

Case Study and Sample Selection

This study will use the 2007 Balzac Transfer as a case study to investigate the irrigators' decision making process and fill the gap in the literature. Narrative research will be used to collect and analyze stories told by the irrigators who voted in a plebiscite to determine whether or not to accept the 2007 water transfer agreement between the MD of Rocky View and the Western Irrigation District. This case was selected because the 2007 water transfer agreement between Balzac and the Western Irrigation District has been the most publicized and controversial water rights trade in Alberta. Furthermore, its irrigators were expected to be able to express representative views of the water transfer agreement situation. Therefore, this case is an excellent illustration of the current water issue facing an increasing number of Canadian and international communities.

This study will employ selective sampling in order to determine who would participate in the study. Selective sampling refers to a decision made prior to beginning a study to sample participants according to an initial set of criteria (Gladstone, Dupuis, & Wexler, 2006). The participants in this study will be members of the Western Irrigation District who openly voiced their opinion about the 2007 water transfer agreement. This type of sampling will allow the researcher to differentiate between those who opposed agreement and those who were for the agreement, while capturing both common and divergent themes related to their experiences.

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Appendix

A: Telephone Script

Hi _____, my name is Katie Lafreniere. I am a student at the University of Lethbridge. I'm calling because, as part of my master's degree, I am conducting a study on the factors that farmers considered when they decided to vote for or against the proposed Balzac transfer. Jim Webber from the WID gave me your name as a community leader with insight as to what was going on in the district. Let me be clear that this study is for my thesis and for academic purposes only. Can I set up a time at a later date to talk with you about your experience? It can be done in person or by telephone.

If No:

Okay, thank you for your time. Good bye.

If Yes:

Great, thank you. When is a good time for you to talk with me?

Would it be more convenient for you to have this conversation in person or by telephone?

If by telephone:

Okay, I will send you a consent form for you to read over before our meeting. Can I send it to your e-mail or would you prefer regular mail? What is your e-mail/ mailing address?

Okay, thank you very much. I look forward to talking with you on the ____ [Insert date here] ____

Thanks again, bye.

B: Consent Form

March 29, 2010

Re: Irrigator Decision Making Study

My name is Katie Lafreniere and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science (Management) Program at the University of Lethbridge. I am involved in a research project that is examining the decision making process of people who have been in a situation to decide whether to share or withhold their water rights. This study is for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree. It is designed to test my competency to complete independent research and present the findings. My role is to report the decision making process of irrigators. This letter seeks your consent to meet with me and provide me with your opinions on a variety of issues related to the project.

Three professors at the university will guide my thesis: Dr. Sameer Deshpande, Dr. Gordon Hunter and Dr. Henning Bjornlund. However, I will conduct your interview.

We are asking to meet with you because of your involvement with the 2007 water transfer agreement between the Western Irrigation District and Balzac. Your opinions are important to us and will help us understand the decision making processes that you experienced. Your opinions will be used to arrive at common themes that arise from interviews. We will publish reports and academic articles from the interview data. All of the information that we receive from you will be kept confidential. None of these publications will contain respondent names or any other identifying characteristics. You will be entered under a pseudonym in the publications. Only the thesis committee and I will have access to the data which will be kept in secure storage. The digital recordings and transcripts of interviews will be destroyed after all the data has been published.

Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. You have the right to say no to the entire interview or withdraw at any time with no consequences. In order to capture your responses accurately, I will record our conversation.

After the interview, if you have questions, or if you wish to receive the final report containing our findings, please contact me at 403-329-7158; katie.lafreniere@uleth.ca or my supervisor, Dr. Sameer Deshpande at 403-329-5196; sameer.deshpande@uleth.ca. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge (Phone: 403-329-2747 or Email: research.services@uleth.ca).

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Management Human Subject Research Committee at the University of Lethbridge. The study conforms to the ethical

guidelines and standards as described in the Tri-Council Policy Statement for ethical conduct of research involving humans.

I hereby consent to this interview.

Yes___ No___

I hereby grant permission to be audio recorded.

Yes___ No___

Respondent_____ Date_____

C: Interview Protocol

1. Participant Background
 - a. Personal
 - i. Education
 - ii. Work Experience
 - iii. Family
2. Water Transfer Issue
 - a. Describe your involvement in the 2007 water transfer agreement?
 - i. How important was this decision to you?
 - ii. Did you have any goals in this situation?
 - iii. Did you have much spare time to consider about the agreement?
 - b. What did you know about the water issue before you heard about the prospective 2007 water transfer agreement?
 - i. How would you describe the water issue going on at that time?
 - ii. How did it affect you? (motivation)
 - iii. Do you think you or the WID had the resources to solve the issue? (opportunity)
 - iv. What was your solution to the issue? (ability)
 - c. Can you please describe your experience with the 2007 water transfer agreement?
 - i. You can start around the time when you first heard of the agreement
 - ii. How did it personally affect your situation?
 - d. Can you remember anything in particular that happened, any incident or occasion, involving the 2007 water transfer agreement?
 - i. Did this situation affect your vote? How?
 - e. Can you remember a situation where you were approached about the agreement?
 - i. Can you remember how that came about?
 - ii. When did it start?
 - iii. Who started it?
 - iv. What did they say?
 - v. Were they positive or negative about the agreement?
 - vi. Were you offered any incentives? What did you think of that?
 - vii. Do you think that they considered your best interests? (motivation)
 - viii. How did they offer to solve the issue? (opportunity)
 - ix. Did you think this option would solve the issue? (ability)
 - x. Were you approached any other times?
 - f. Can you remember any occasion where you were able to discuss the agreement with other people involved?
 - i. What did you talk about

- ii. What did they say
 - iii. Were they positive or negative about the agreement?
 - iv. Did you agree or disagree with what they said
 - v. Did this situation affect your vote?
 - g. Can you remember any occasion on which you sought any further information on the agreement?
 - i. What happened?
 - ii. Who did you talk to
 - iii. Were they positive or negative about the agreement?
 - iv. What did you want to learn more about?
 - v. What did you find out?
 - vi. Did this situation affect your vote? How?
 - h. Can you remember any occasion on which you determined how you would vote?
 - i. Can you tell me in more detail how that happened?
 - ii. How did you feel at the time?
 - iii. Were you comfortable or apprehensive about this decision?
 - i. Why did you choose to vote that way?
 - i. Compared to the other option, was this choice high or low risk? Why?
 - ii. How did you feel about your options? Why? (Decision frame)
 - iii. How do you justify your decision?
3. General Comments
- a. Do you have any further comments to add?
 - b. Can you recommend anyone else who would be beneficial to interview for this study?