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COGNITIVE DISSONANCE: ROLES IN CONTRADICTION IN CONSCIOUSNESS

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Abstract:
Cognitive dissonance, a pivotal concept in psychology, refers to the psychological discomfort caused by holding conflicting beliefs, values, or attitudes simultaneously. This concept, formally introduced by Leon Festinger in 1957, has gained widespread recognition for its applicability in various fields such as social psychology, behavioral economics, and marketing. While commonly understood as internal conflict, cognitive dissonance is a complex phenomenon influencing decision-making, emotional regulation, and interpersonal interactions. This article delves deeply into the historical origins of cognitive dissonance, its empirical validation, and its implications in societal, cultural, and business contexts. Drawing on the aftermath of the 1934 Nepal–India earthquake, Festinger's experimental studies, and contemporary issues in telecommunications, this study underscores the enduring relevance of cognitive dissonance in understanding human behavior.

Keywords: Cognitive Dissonance, perceptual distortion, historical origin of cognitive dissonance, experiment, perception in modern society.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contradictions are an inherent part of human existence. Whether it is grappling with unmet expectations, ethical dilemmas, or social pressures, individuals often experience a psychological tension when their beliefs, actions, or values conflict. This tension, known as cognitive dissonance, motivates people to seek resolution, often by altering their beliefs or perceptions. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance has become a cornerstone in understanding how individuals navigate these contradictions, offering insights into everything from rumor-spreading during crises to consumer behavior and cultural biases.

1.1 Historical Context and Origins

In fact, there are subtle nuances here. Why cognitive dissonance is a very useful lens through which to look at the events of your life. The root of this psychotherapy that has led to unexpected and interesting discoveries that have enriched our knowledge of our psyche actually begins in 1934. The 1934 Nepal–India earthquake or 1934 Bihar–Nepal earthquake was one of the worst earthquakes in India's history. The towns of Munger and Muzaffarpur were completely destroyed. This 8.0 magnitude earthquake occurred on 15 January 1934 at around 2:13 pm. The epicenter for this event was located in eastern Nepal about 9.5 km (5.9 mi) south of Mount Everest. The areas where the most damage to life and property occurred extended from Purnia in the east to Champaran in the west (a distance of nearly 320 km or 200 mi), and from Kathmandu in the north to Munger in the south (a distance of nearly 465 km or 289 mi). The impact was reported to be felt in Lhasa to Bombay, and from Assam to Punjab. The earthquake was so severe that in Kolkata, around 650 km (404 mi) from epicenter, many buildings were damaged. The three major towns of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal-Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan were severely affected and almost all the buildings collapsed. Large cracks appeared in the ground and several roads were damaged in Kathmandu; however, the temple of Pashupatinath, the guardian deity of Nepal, escaped any damage. The 1618-meter-long Kosi Rail Bridge on the Metre Gauge Railway line connecting Darbhanga Raj with Forbesganj was washed away and the River Kosi changed it path eastward. In Sitamarhi, not a single house was left standing. In Bhagalpur district many buildings collapsed. In Patna, many buildings in the bazaar were destroyed and damage was particularly severe along the river. In Rajnagar, near Madhubani, all the Kutcha buildings collapsed. The buildings of Darbhanga Raj, including the famous Navlakha Palace, were severely damaged. In Jharia the earthquake led to further spread of underground fire. The town of Birgunj was destroyed, along with its telephone line to Kathmandu. The number of deaths was 10,700–12,000 with 7,253 recorded in Bihar.Official scientific Explanations: Possible Causes The first reports to emerge, after two months of investigations, came as

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preliminary reports for the local governments of the affected regions. The object of these reports was, however, not to give a scientific description of the earthquake but toad vise the government on "fundamental questions of reconstruction." The first reports started to appear four months after the earthquake and the second report for the public appeared approximately six months later ("early May") in 1934. During this period, people were scared, rumors began to spread that the earthquake would soon be repeated. Someone said that a tornado would soon hit India, and all the water in the Ganges River had disappeared. How many rumors strike our ears, an unknown psychologist in the Indian city of Patna thought then and documented this unofficial data circulating among the people (Historical Disaster Experiences 2017). He was haunted by one question: if people are so afraid, if they are scared and if there is horror all around, why do they increase rumors? Why do they spread conditions that only escalate, heat up the situation. At that time, this question remained unanswered, but 20 years later these records caught the eye of the brilliant American psychologist Leon Festinger and based on this documentation, he founded the theory of cognitive dissonance. He noticed a very interesting thing: the most active distributors of rumors were not those whose houses were destroyed and whose relatives died under the rubble, but those who were far from the Epicenter and whose lives had hardly changed. They were scared, like everyone else. They were horrified to read the news, but the houses around them were not damaged. People were alive and well. A contradiction arose, which the whole world would call cognitive dissonance.

Based on these factors, Leon Festinger conducted an experiment in 1957. Leon Festinger and James Carlsmith's 1957 study provided the first empirical validation of cognitive dissonance theory. In this experiment, 71 Stanford University students participated in a series of monotonous tasks designed to elicit boredom. After completing the tasks, participants were asked to convince another group that the activities were enjoyable. The subjects turned fake levers on the table first clockwise, then counterclockwise, and so on for more than an hour. Of course, the students who agreed to take part in the study, not knowing its essence, died of boredom, and here is the most interesting thing, at the end of this torture of despondency, the student is told - "Listen, buddy, well, in general, we are studying the influence of motivation on performance. Could you go to that guy in the hallway, who is next to undergo this study, and tell him that the experiment is going to be interesting and fun. It's just that we used to have a special person who did this, but today he got sick, please do it, and we will give you, his salary." And half of the students got 1 dollar, and the other half got 20 dollars. By the way, this was the fifties. In today's times, you can easily multiply this amount by the actions, that is, 200 dollars for this small work, if this action can be called work. Where do they pay so much for a lie now. And the student took the money and went to tell the next participant that the experiment was interesting, but tricky. Leon Festinger outplayed everyone.

The next participant was a dummy, and the main part of the experiment was ahead of the laboratory, the student went to the academic department and took a survey of satisfaction with the experiments conducted at the faculty, where an actor posing as a university employee asked the past experimenter. The participant was asked the question - "How did you like this experiment and would you be willing to repeat participation in it?" Who do you think liked the experiment more and who was willing to repeat? Everyone who was paid a dollar or those who were paid 20? It seems logical that whoever was paid more is more satisfied. That's right, 200 dollars in today's money for an hour and a half of torture is not so bad. In fact, everything turned out to be exactly the opposite. More satisfaction, more satisfaction, statements, just those who were paid only one dollar, the purpose of this whole action was to create cognitive dissonance in. The subject has a tomb. One spoke. It was the most boring thing I've ever done in my life. They convinced themselves that they themselves said that this was an interesting experiment. These thoughts are unpleasant, uncomfortable, oppressive and of course, the psyche wants to get rid of them, which the consciousness had to reduce cognitive dissonance. Information about payment those who were paid more smoothed out cognitive dissonance - this is a contradiction. Yes, it was very boring, but they said that the experiment was interesting because they were paid, I provided a service. And those who were paid only 1 dollar, well, it's somehow difficult to convince yourself. That for 1 dollar they sold out, that they lied spending such a paltry payment. Therefore, they had to change from two cognitions already existing. Well, we realized that cognitive dissonance is unpleasant, it is uncomfortable, it is disturbing, and our psyche seeks to get rid of it. A contradiction arose, which the whole world would call cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957).

2. Applications in Modern Society: telecommunications and Public Perception

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In modern society, particularly in the business sphere, the theory of cognitive dissonance continues to play a significant role in how we perceive and respond to new technologies and infrastructure. One notable example is the public concern surrounding mobile operators and the potential health effects of radiation emitted by their base stations and telecommunications towers. This issue has become particularly resonant as communities sometimes report health problems—such as headaches, fatigue, or sleep disturbances following the installation of such towers. These complaints often fuel fears, even though there may be no direct scientific evidence linking them to the actual radiation levels emitted by the towers. The phenomenon is a clear case of cognitive dissonance: people experience a psychological discomfort when the reality of the towers' emissions (which are within established safety standards) conflicts with their fear or suspicion about the potential health risks. For example, in Uzbekistan, the permissible radiation levels from telecommunications towers are strictly regulated. According to the Sanitary Norms and Rules, the maximum allowable radiation level is set at 10 μW/cm², a standard that has been legislatively substantiated and officially approved by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This threshold is designed to ensure that the radiation emitted by mobile infrastructure remains well within safe limits for public health. Furthermore, each radio communication facility is required to obtain a "sanitary passport," a certification that confirms its compliance with these environmental standards. When comparing Uzbekistan's regulations with those of other countries, it's interesting to see how these standards stack up (Sanitary rules and regulations, 2019). For instance: The United States: The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) allows exposure levels of up to 580 μW/cm² for mobile antennas, which is significantly higher than Uzbekistan's 10 μW/cm² (Guidelines for Cellular Antenna Sites Guide, 2019). This discrepancy highlights the more conservative approach taken by Uzbekistan in protecting public health. European Union: In countries like Germany and France, the permissible radiation levels are also as in Uzbekistan set lower than those in the U.S. For example, Germany has a limit of around 10 μW/cm², but the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) recommends exposure levels of up to 100 μW/cm². Also, many countries from the Commonwealth of Independent States such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan the maximum radiation level for mobile base stations is set at 10 μW/cm², and even this one factor is not a reason to conclude everything is so bad for since according to studies by the World Health Organization, published in 2006 and 2011, there is not a single precedent of harm to human health caused by base stations of mobile operators, but even such factors do not guarantee the absence of a pessimistic mood in society, since in such situations the phenomenon of conjunctive dissonance plays a key role. These comparisons highlight how Uzbekistan's standards are among the more conservative globally, emphasizing a precautionary approach to managing radiation exposure from telecommunications infrastructure. The public perception of these base stations, however, is often influenced by factors beyond the technical standards. Fear and misinformation can easily spread, especially in the absence of clear communication from authorities about safety standards. Additionally, the psychological impact of living near a large, visible telecommunications tower can lead to increased feelings of discomfort and unease, even if the radiation levels are far below the safety threshold. In this context, understanding cognitive dissonance becomes essential for businesses and government bodies. Addressing public concerns through education, transparent communication, and reassurance that the infrastructure meets or exceeds safety standards is crucial in reducing the psychological impact and promoting greater public trust. In conclusion, while there is strong scientific evidence supporting the safety of mobile towers within established radiation limits, the theory of cognitive dissonance helps explain why these concerns persist. By comparing Uzbekistan's radiation standards with those of other countries, we can see that the country is operating with a high level of caution, further underscoring the commitment to public health and safety. We can see how ECO-FRIENDLY Uzbek telecommunications are. Conjunctive dissonance occurs when a person experiences a psychological conflict between two or more beliefs or information, which causes internal tension. In this context, the installation of a mobile tower, which people can associate with dangerous radiation, causes them anxiety. However, the station itself may not yet be active, that is, when the station is nothing more than a simple iron structure, despite this, people often begin to associate their ailments or deteriorating health with the presence of the tower, even if it is not yet functioning. One of the most important factors contributing to the negative perception of mobile and telecommunications towers is perceptual bias, the tendency for people to perceive information through the lens of their fears and preconceived notions. This phenomenon prevents a person from objectively assessing a situation, as

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perception is influenced by emotions, fears, or social stereotypes. In the case of mobile towers, the perception of radiation as a health hazard may be due to insufficient information, previous rumors, or negative stereotypes prevalent in society. In the case of mobile towers, this bias often manifests itself in the form of unfounded fears about the harmful effects of radiation.

2.1 Factors influencing perceptual distortion.

There are four main factors that play a role in this process of perceptual distortion:

2.1.1 Fear of the unknown: When people learn that a mobile tower is being built nearby, many begin to associate it with radiation risks, even if the facility is not yet operational. This happens because their minds are dominated by the perception of radiation as a harmful event, regardless of the fact that at that moment there is no radiation from the tower or it is within safe limits.

2.1.2 Search for causes of symptoms: People tend to look for an explanation for their ailments in events happening in their environment. For example, if someone starts complaining of a headache or fatigue, and a mobile tower is being built nearby, this may cause an association between the symptoms and the installation of the tower, even if the real causes of the ailment are hidden in other factors, such as stress, fatigue, or changing weather conditions.

2.1.3. Social influence: When one person in a community expresses concern about possible exposure to cell tower radiation, it can cause a chain reaction, with others experiencing the same symptoms. This behavior is often observed in group dynamics, where one person's opinion or experience influences others.

2.1.4. The role of rumors and misinformation: In some cases, rumors and misinformation can reinforce perceptual distortions. If myths about the dangers of cell tower radiation are widespread in the community, even those who do not experience obvious symptoms may begin to associate them with the proximity of the tower, increasing public anxiety.

2.2 Mitigation against the impact of perceptual distortions

2.2.1. Education and information: Telecom operators and cell tower builders should actively inform the public that cell tower radiation levels comply with international safety standards and do not pose a health risk. Transparency and accessibility of information help dispel myths and reduce unfounded fears.

2.2.2. Public debate and community engagement: Key to reducing perceptual bias: One of the most effective ways to mitigate the impact of perceptual bias, especially in situations involving controversial topics like cell phone towers, is through open public debate and active community engagement. When people feel they have access to accurate information and a platform to voice their concerns, the likelihood of forming perceptual bias is significantly reduced.

2.3 The Importance of Public Debate

Perceptual bias often occurs when people form opinions or beliefs based on limited or distorted information. Without a proper understanding of the facts, they may rely on rumors, myths, or previous negative experiences to interpret new information. For example, when a new cell phone tower is being built, concerns may arise about potential health risks or environmental damage. If these concerns are not addressed through clear and transparent communication, they may escalate and lead to misconceptions. It is also important to note that public debate helps break this cycle of misinformation and confusion. They provide an opportunity for experts and local residents to directly engage, where the public can ask questions, voice concerns, and most importantly, receive accurate, evidence-based answers. This form of engagement helps reduce anxiety and mistrust and promotes a sense of transparency and inclusivity. Misinformation is also a common source of misperceptions. Rumors and myths often spread faster than facts, especially when it comes to new technologies like cell phone towers. Public debates provide a platform to directly correct these misconceptions. Experts can clarify the science behind cell phone use, demonstrate safety measures in place, and debunk false claims about health risks or environmental impacts. Community empowerment should be considered when people feel their voices are heard and that they can ask questions and receive answers, which gives them power. Feeling heard leads to a sense of control over the situation, which can reduce feelings of helplessness and anxiety. Extended communities are more likely to embrace new technologies when they understand their benefits, safety measures, and reduced anxiety and fear. Perception distortions often arise from fear, which is exacerbated by the unknown. Open discussions help demystify the technology, clarify its effects (or lack thereof), and provide information about the safety of the towers. This helps allay fears and reduces the likelihood of mass hysteria or public protests based on false assumptions. Developing a collaborative approach is also important, as involving the community in decision-making helps createfoster a sense of partnership between mobile operators, government agencies, and residents. This encourages a collaborative approach to problem solving where solutions can be tailored to local issues. For example, if

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Vol. 42, January, 2025
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residents express concerns about the aesthetic impact of a tower, operators can work to minimize the visual impact by changing the design. At the same time, public debates provide a unique opportunity for education. These events aim not only to provide information, but also to educate the public on broader issues such as the development of technology, the importance of communications infrastructure, and how these technologies have evolved to become safe and effective. This helps change public perception from fear to understanding and acceptance. Best practices for effective community engagement. It turns out that public debate and community participation are critical to reducing the impact of perceptual bias, especially in the context of controversial infrastructure projects such as mobile phone towers. By providing a forum for open dialogue, experts can directly address public concerns, correct misinformation, and build a sense of trust and transparency. Not only does this help allay fears, it also empowers the community to make informed decisions based on facts rather than misconceptions. As the example of Minister Sherzod Shermatov's efforts in Uzbekistan shows, when government officials and companies take the initiative to directly engage with the public, they can significantly reduce anxiety, increase trust, and ultimately ensure that technological advances are received positively by the public.

2.4. Actively Engaging the Media: Combating Perceptional Distortion and Disinformation

A critical component of reducing perceptional distortion, especially around controversial issues like cell towers and telecommunications infrastructure, is effective engagement with the media. The media plays an important role in shaping public opinion, disseminating information, and influencing how new technologies are perceived by the public. When it comes to topics like cell towers, misinformation and myths can spread quickly, especially when there is misunderstanding or sensational claims are made. Well-presented, fact-based information in the media can play a significant role in dispelling myths and easing public anxiety. Engaging journalists and the media is critical to ensuring that the public receives accurate, science-based information rather than being swayed by misconceptions and fear-based narratives. Naturally, some may wonder why engaging the media is critical. First, the media as a primary source of information: The media – whether television, radio, newspapers, online platforms, or social media – act as the primary source of information for most people. For example, we can take the resonant fakes in the initial stages of the emergence of coronavirus infection, unreliable data was progressively spread in society on a huge scale. Examples of sources of false information that have significantly influenced the consciousness and attitude of society towards the COVID-19 pandemic are given, as well as ways to eliminate them. Positive and negative aspects of the influence of emerging memes, their origin and the functions they performed in relation to the population, which was in a tense state due to the current situation in the world. The article substantiates the processes of manipulation carried out thanks to fake news, memes and data published for the sake of "hype".(Archakova Maria " Fakes and memes covid 19: inappropriate laughter therapy or healing optimism " 2020. There was a lot of information about the country of detection of the virus and carriers up to bats and sabers. But in fact, COVID-19, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus2 (SARS-CoV-2), was first identified in Wuhan, China and later declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). The disease is spread through airborne droplets released from the nose and mouth when coughing, sneezing, and talking. Preventive measures against this infectious disease can be taken by raising awareness and implementing a process of contact tracing. Contact tracing aims to find infected individuals as well as individuals who have been in contact with infected individuals.(Ogunmola, G. A., Enbeyle, W., & Mahdaoui, W. (2021). An empirical validation of learn from home a case of COVID-19 catalysed online distance learning in India and Morocco.). Therefore, a literate and well-informed public often relies on literate journalists and media professionals to break down complex topics and present them in an understandable manner. Media coverage therefore plays a critical role in how the public shapes its perception of issues such as cell phone towers. If inaccurate or misleading information is disseminated, it can significantly distort public understanding, leading to fear and opposition based on false assumptions. Second, combat myths and misinformation: One of the major problems associated with cell phone towers is the spread of myths and misconceptions. Common myths include the belief that cell phone towers emit dangerous levels of radiation that cause cancer or other health problems. These claims often arise from limited knowledge, isolated incidents, or misinterpretations of scientific research.If these misconceptions are not covered by the media, they can quickly gain momentum, leading to mass panic or public resistance to the installation of new towers. The role of the media in education goes beyond simply conveying information; it can also educate the public. Well-conducted interviews, investigations, and feature

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Vol. 42, January, 2025
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articles can provide detailed explanations of the technology behind cell phone towers and the regulations that govern their construction and operation. Through media coverage, the public can be informed about the specific frequency of radiation used by cell phone towers and the scientific consensus that this level is well below the thresholds that can cause harm. Moreover, the media can provide platforms for experts, including scientists, engineers, and health officials, to directly discuss any issues or concerns. Such education helps the public understand the science behind the technology, mobile communications and allays fears fueled by misinformation. Working with the media also allows operators and regulators to be transparent about the safety standards they adhere to and the precautions they take when installing mobile phone towers. When companies or government agencies communicate directly with journalists, they can provide verifiable facts and evidence that build public trust. Being transparent about issues ensures that the public does not feel excluded or manipulated, which is often the root cause of skepticism about new technologies. Moreover, when the media reports on efforts to protect public health, such as strict adherence to global safety standards (such as those set by the World Health Organization and other international bodies), it reassures people that the technology is being used responsibly.

Media as a platform for public dialogue: Engaging the media does not only mean issuing press releases or answering journalists' questions. It also means using media platforms to create space for public dialogue. Talk shows, interviews and debates featuring experts, government officials and members of the public can play an important role in facilitating the discussion about mobile towers. These forums allow concerns to be aired, but more importantly, they provide experts with the opportunity to correct misunderstandings and present well-founded facts. Public service campaigns or media outreach programs can also be used to educate the public about how mobile technology contributes to the economy, supports emergency services and improves everyday life. By actively engaging with the media, operators and regulators can shape the dialogue in a way that helps manage and reduce public anxiety. Best practices for effective media engagement. For example, we can take the approach of the Minister for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sherzod Shermatov. One of the first public discussions regarding the problems of mobile operators was a meeting of the International Press Club in 2017. The Minister for Development of Information Technologies and Communications of the Republic of Uzbekistan demonstrated the power of such public engagement during this press club dedicated to the development of mobile communications in Uzbekistan. The event provided a forum for both the media and the public to discuss the progress of mobile infrastructure in the country. During this open dialogue, the minister addressed a number of issues related to the development of mobile networks, including the construction of new communication towers. He explained the strict safety standards, minimal health risks associated with mobile technology, and the broader benefits of improved network coverage. This direct interaction with the public helped to dispel myths and provide facts about the safety and necessity of infrastructure projects (podrobno.uz 2017). The benefits of such press club meetings, public debates and participation Build trust and transparency by engaging the community in discussions about technologies and their impacts, companies and government agencies show that they are committed to transparency. This builds trust between residents and government, which is necessary to reduce suspicion and perceptions of secrecy or negligence. There are also a few best practices that can be followed to ensure effective media engagement:

- Provide clear and accessible information: When providing information to journalists, ensure it is clear, accurate, and presented in a way that the general public can easily understand. Avoid using overly technical language, as this can confuse audiences. Use graphics, infographics, and other visuals to help explain complex topics, such as how cell phone towers emit non-ionizing radiation at safe levels.
- Engage with credible experts: Journalists need reliable sources to back up their claims. Engaging experts such as researchers, public health professionals, and engineers who can provide authoritative insights is critical. Providing media outlets with access to these experts can ensure that reporting is based on sound science.
- Proactively address public concerns: Rather than reacting to negative stories or misinformation after they have already spread, proactively reach out to journalists with accurate information. Issue regular press releases, hold press conferences, and provide updates that proactively address common issues related to cell towers.

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Vol. 42, January, 2025
ISSN: 2749-3628,

- Use multiple media platforms: Different segments of the population consume information through different media channels. Some prefer traditional channels such as newspapers and television, while others rely on digital platforms and social media. Engage with a wide range of media to ensure that the message reaches all segments of society. Social media in particular provides an excellent opportunity to directly engage with the public, where issues can be addressed in real time.
- Monitor media coverage: Continuously monitor media coverage to track how the issue is being presented and identify potential misinformation. When incorrect or misleading information is reported, it is important to respond quickly and respectfully, providing the correct facts and requesting correction or clarification if necessary.
- Use testimonials and case studies: Real-life examples of how mobile phone towers have been successfully integrated into communities without causing harm can be compelling. Whether it's demonstrating positive local impacts or presenting case studies from cities or countries with well-developed telecom infrastructure, using testimonials and case studies helps humanize the story and provides real-world evidence of safety and benefits.

So, we see that proactive media outreach is an indispensable tool in combating the misperceptions surrounding mobile towers and telecom infrastructure. By ensuring that accurate, science-based information is disseminated through trusted media, the spread of misinformation can be minimized. Engaging with the media not only helps dispel myths, but also promotes public education, trust, and transparency. When journalists and media professionals are equipped with the right information and resources, they can play a key role in guiding public perceptions toward a more rational, informed, and balanced view of mobile towers, thereby reducing fear and creating acceptance of new technologies. This detailed explanation highlights the critical role that the media plays in shaping public opinion and the importance of working with journalists to provide accurate, science-based information. Proactive media engagement can be effective in reducing the impact of perceptual distortion.

3. Explaining how mobile phone towers work.

3.1. Reducing anxiety and building trust

One of the most effective ways to reduce perceptual distortion and ease public concerns about mobile phone towers is to provide clear and detailed explanations of how these towers work. Understanding the technology behind mobile phone towers, the type of radiation they emit, and the safety measures in place helps people feel more informed and less afraid of the unknown. When the public is armed with accurate knowledge, misconceptions and fears can be addressed head-on, leading to greater acceptance of mobile phone towers and their benefits. Key aspects of mobile phone towers and their functionality. To build public trust, it is important to break down the complex technical aspects of mobile phone towers into understandable concepts. Educate the public on how mobile phone towers work: Key functionalities. Mobile phone towers, also known as base stations, are structures that enable wireless communication by transmitting signals between mobile devices (such as smartphones) and the cellular network. These towers are equipped with antennas that send and receive electromagnetic signals, enabling voice calls, text messages, and internet access. Mobile phone towers are an integral part of a cellular network, which is divided into smaller areas called cells. Each cell is served by a base station (mobile phone tower), which transmits signals within a certain radius. When a person uses a mobile phone within the coverage area of a base station, the signal from their device is sent to the tower, which then transmits the information to the network. The tower also receives signals from the network and transmits them to the mobile device, ensuring uninterrupted communication. This process is repeated across many towers, creating a coverage network that provides uninterrupted communication over large areas. Information about safety regulations and standards should also be provided. One of the key factors in reassuring the public is the explanation of the strict safety standards that govern the operation of mobile phone towers. Regulatory bodies such as the World Health Organization (WHO). The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) and local governments set guidelines to ensure that mobile phone towers do not emit harmful levels of radio frequency radiation. These organizations base their guidelines on extensive scientific research and studies, ensuring that radiation levels remain well below thresholds known to cause any health risks. Mobile phone towers must adhere to strict radiation limits and undergo regular inspections to ensure that they meet safety standards. The reason why radiation from mobile phone towers is safe is because of both its low energy and the distance at which it is emitted. To further clarify:

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Vol. 42, January, 2025
ISSN: 2749-3628,

- Non-ionizing Radiation: As mentioned earlier, RF radiation is non-ionizing, meaning that it does not carry enough energy to strip electrons from atoms or molecules and cause cell damage, unlike ionizing radiation (such as x-rays).
- Low Exposure Levels: The RF power levels emitted by mobile phone towers are extremely low compared to the radiation levels we are exposed to from other everyday sources. For example, RF levels from mobile phone towers are much lower than the exposure people are exposed to from natural sources such as the Earth's magnetic field or cosmic radiation from space.
- Safety Limits: Mobile phone operators and tower manufacturers are bound by international safety regulations that are based on decades of research. These limits ensure that the radiation emitted by the towers remains well below levels that could pose any risk to human health (**Maqbool 2023).**

It follows that public education about how mobile phone towers work, the type of radiation they emit, and the safety measures in place is critical to reducing anxiety and building trust in these structures. When people understand that mobile phone towers emit low levels of non-ionizing radiation within safe limits and that these towers operate according to strict safety standards, the fears associated with their presence are significantly reduced. Knowledge enables people to accept new technologies with confidence, leading to a smoother integration of these important infrastructures into communities (History of Simple Things, 2024).

3.2. Consumer Behavior and Marketing: The Role of Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive dissonance, a psychological concept, plays an important role in consumer behavior and marketing strategies. It refers to the discomfort people experience when they hold contradictory beliefs, attitudes, or values, or when their behavior contradicts their beliefs. In response to this discomfort, people are motivated to reduce the inconsistency - often by changing their attitudes, beliefs, or behavior in order to achieve a sense of internal harmony. In the context of telecommunications, cognitive dissonance affects how consumers make decisions about mobile services, products, and infrastructure. In the telecommunications industry, cognitive dissonance can have significant economic consequences. Unfounded fears and misconceptions, often fueled by misinformation or lack of understanding, can slow the development of necessary infrastructure such as mobile towers and base stations. When consumers are unsure or concerned about potential health risks associated with, for example, mobile towers, they may express opposition to the construction of these towers in their communities. This opposition creates a feedback loop in which operators face increased public resistance to necessary infrastructure developments. As a result, operators may be forced to use more expensive equipment, including higher-quality metal structures and advanced technology, to reduce risk perceptions and meet public demands. These additional costs, in turn, increase the financial burden of building base stations, which ultimately leads to higher service costs for consumers. Thus, the spread of misinformation and public anxiety caused by cognitive dissonance not only hinders infrastructure development, but also leads to artificially inflated costs that harm both consumers and operators. Marketers are well aware of the power of cognitive dissonance and often use it strategically to influence consumer behavior. In fact, advertising and marketing campaigns often use the concept of cognitive dissonance to encourage consumers to purchase products or services that resolve their internal conflicts or help them align their behavior with their values or desired self-image.

3.2.1 Creating inconsistencies between current behavior and desired lifestyle

One of the most common marketing strategies is to highlight the inconsistency between a consumer's current behavior and their ideal lifestyle or self-image. Advertising often presents an image of the "ideal self" that consumers aspire to be, which can cause cognitive dissonance. For example, an advertisement for a new smartphone might emphasize that the device is not just a communication tool, but a symbol of status, success, or modernity. Dissonance occurs when consumers feel that their current phone or communication habits do not match this idealized version of themselves. To address this discomfort, consumers can be motivated to purchase the product to reduce the dissonance and align their behavior with the desired image.

3.2.2 Coping with uncertainty and fear

In the case of telecommunications services, consumers may experience cognitive dissonance if they feel that they are not getting the most reliable service or the best value for money. Companies often create marketing campaigns that highlight the inadequacies or uncertainties that consumers may encounter with competitors (e.g., dropped calls, weak signal, slow internet speeds) and position their own services as the solution to these problems. By highlighting these

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inconsistencies where current consumer behavior or service experiences are perceived as inadequate companies create a sense of urgency in consumers to switch to their services, which they perceive as more reliable or superior. The discomfort of potential inadequacy prompts consumers to take action to restore a sense of compliance with their expectations or needs.

3.2.3 Offering solutions to internal conflict

Cognitive dissonance can also occur when consumers are torn between two conflicting options or are unsure of the best choice for their needs. In response, marketers often offer clear solutions that resolve this internal conflict. For example, if a mobile phone operator advertises an unlimited data plan along with a message emphasizing the convenience and flexibility it offers, consumers who are frustrated with their limited data plans may feel compelled to upgrade to a different plan to alleviate the perceived limitation or anxiety associated with their current service.

3.2.4 Post-Purchase Dissonance and Reinforcement

After consumers make a purchase, cognitive dissonance may still persist if they begin to doubt that they have made the right decision. Marketers can reduce post-purchase dissonance by offering reassurance and positive reinforcement. For example, after the purchase of a telecommunications service, companies often send follow-up messages emphasizing the benefits of the product or service, displaying customer testimonials, or providing additional perks to confirm the consumer's decision. Such reassurance helps reduce the discomfort of any doubts the consumer may have by reinforcing their choice and ensuring that they will remain satisfied with the product or service. An example of cognitive dissonance in telecommunications marketing. Consider a telecommunications company promoting a new 5G service. Consumers currently using 4G may feel that their service is "good enough" and will not be motivated to upgrade. To create cognitive dissonance, a marketing campaign might emphasize the speed, reliability, and futuristic benefits of 5G, positioning it as a significant improvement over 4G. Advertising might focus on how 5G provides faster downloads, better streaming quality, and an improved gaming experience—services that consumers may want but feel they are missing out on on their current network. The marketing campaign creates dissonance by emphasizing that the consumer's current 4G service is outdated and insufficient for future needs. This prompts the consumer to resolve the discomfort by purchasing a newer 5G plan, thereby aligning their behavior with the perceived "better" choice. While cognitive dissonance can be used to influence consumer purchasing decisions, it can also have negative consequences for the telecommunications industry if misinformation and fear about technologies such as cell towers lead to unnecessary resistance. This kind of dissonance can hinder the adoption of new technologies, delay the construction of needed infrastructure, and lead to higher costs for consumers. Furthermore, when consumers act on cognitive dissonance without being fully informed, they may make decisions based on incomplete information or inaccurate information, which can have long-term consequences for both consumers and companies in the telecommunications industry. So, by understanding how dissonance affects decisions, telecommunications companies can better address public infrastructure issues, while marketers can design campaigns that influence consumer choices. In both cases, providing clear, accurate information and eliminating any misconceptions is key to reducing dissonance and helping consumers make well-informed, confident decisions. When cognitive dissonance is managed responsibly, it can create opportunities for growth and innovation. However, when it is exploited with misinformation or creates unnecessary anxiety, it can hinder technological development and increase costs, harming both the industry and consumers.

4. Cultural Biases and Decision Making

Cognitive dissonance is not just an individual psychological experience; it also plays a significant role in cultural and societal contexts, influencing decision making in various aspects of life, including political choices, social behavior, and personal values.

4.1. Cognitive Dissonance in Collectivistic Cultures

One of the clearest examples of cognitive dissonance in a cultural context is found in collectivistic cultures. In these societies, personal beliefs and values are often subordinated to the interests of the group, and social harmony is valued above individual preferences or beliefs. In collectivistic cultures (such as some Asian countries), maintaining harmony within families, communities, or work groups is of paramount importance. When an individual's personal beliefs conflict with social norms or group expectations, this can lead to cognitive dissonance. To reduce this dissonance, people may adjust their beliefs or behavior to conform to group norms. For example, a person who values personal leisure time may agree to work overtime or participate in group activities even if they do not want to, in order to maintain social harmony within the group. People from collectivist cultures may also reinterpret or change their personal beliefs to fit the expectations of the group. This may involve

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justifying their actions or even changing their opinions to fit societal expectations.

4.2. Cognitive Dissonance in Individualistic Cultures

In contrast to collectivist societies, individualistic cultures (such as the United States or parts of Europe) place greater emphasis on personal achievement and independence. However, cognitive dissonance may still occur in these cultures, especially when personal beliefs or behaviors clash with societal norms or expectations.

- The Pursuit of Personal Harmony: In individualistic societies, people may experience cognitive dissonance when their personal values conflict with societal norms that emphasize success, status, or behavior. For example, a person who values personal happiness over career success may experience dissonance when society values work achievements over personal well-being.
- Changing Beliefs to Maintain Self-Esteem: To reduce dissonance, people may change their beliefs or justify their actions. For example, someone who works excessively without enjoying their job may change their perspective on their work by convincing themselves that their hard work is meaningful and in line with their goals of success.

5. Cognitive Dissonance in Political Decision Making

Cognitive dissonance also plays a crucial role in political decision making. Many political decisions and behaviors are not based solely on logical analysis or factual information, but are heavily influenced by pre-existing beliefs, internalized values, and emotional factors that can cause cognitive dissonance.

5.1. Cognitive Dissonance and Voting Behavior

Supporting Candidates Contradicting Personal Values: In politics, cognitive dissonance is often observed when people support a candidate or political party whose actions or policies contradict their own values. For example, a voter may support a candidate whose policies conflict with their beliefs on issues such as climate change, human rights, or economic policy due to party affiliation or ideological preferences. To mitigate this dissonance, voters often reinterpret or justify the candidate's actions. They may rationalize that "all politicians compromise" or prioritize other issues such as economic growth or national security over controversial aspects of the candidate's platform. Cognitive dissonance can also lead to selective perception or confirmation bias, where people filter information in a way that reinforces their existing beliefs. For example, a voter who supports a particular political party may ignore or downplay negative information about the party and focus on positive aspects that support their existing views. When new information or evidence contradicts a person's political beliefs, they often reinterpret it to fit their existing beliefs. For example, if a politician they support is involved in a scandal, a voter may ignore the significance of the scandal or reinterpret the facts to justify the candidate's actions. Group Pressure and Collective Justification: Cognitive dissonance in a political context can also be caused by group pressure. People may support a political position or candidate to avoid internal conflict with their social group, even if they personally disagree with certain aspects of the ideology. This leads to group justification, where people rationalize their support for a particular candidate or policy by finding ways to fit in with the group's beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Cognitive dissonance plays a major role in shaping public opinion, especially when people are confronted with a contradiction between scientific data and personal beliefs. To reduce anxiety and prevent the spread of myths, it is important to effectively communicate scientifically based information. Politicians, businessmen, and educators can play a key role in this process by developing communication strategies that help people cope with internal contradictions. Openness, accessibility of information, and consideration of psychological factors contribute to a more balanced and logical perception of new technologies and infrastructural changes. Ultimately, understanding the mechanisms of cognitive dissonance not only allows us to understand public sentiment, but also helps to form a more rational, constructive, and scientifically savvy approach to assessing the world around us.

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