

Personal Construct Psychology

Personal Construct Psychology was developed in 1955 when George Kelly devised his theory of 'man the scientist' who develops hypotheses, tests and modifies or discards them, developing a network of 'constructs' or values along the way. This framework of personal constructs is what we use to construe events, situations and people and to make predictions about the future. We anticipate events using our construct systems and determine our behaviour accordingly. If our behaviour is invalidated our experiment has failed and so we experiment with new behaviour. The theory provides unique insight into behaviour and how to influence behaviour change. Where people use similar constructs in similar ways their thinking processes are similar and communication is easy. They effectively become a market 'psychographic segment'. Interactions' software identifies such natural market groups and defines their personality for communications purposes.

PCP theory can also be used to understand the nature of resistance, and explain the reactions produced when people are faced with change, such as anxiety, fear, threat, guilt and denial.

Personal Construct Psychology has tools and techniques for both qualitative and quantitative research. It is used:

- To gain knowledge of how someone sees the world and make assessments of the things and people in their world. It means that the researcher has to take a credulous non-evaluative role in the interview process. This is particularly valuable because it means that we come to understand the research topic from the perspective of the customer rather than from pre-conceived notions of researcher or service provider.
- To understand their perceptions about a product or service, their personal needs and priorities.
- To identify barriers to change - Personal Construct Theory can also be used to explain the nature of resistance and explain the reactions produced when people are expected or forced to change their behaviours.
- To inform communications development – how to communicate the benefits of a product or service or to suggest new ways of thinking about it; for example the Merseyside TravelWise campaign suggestions of train travel as opening up social opportunities for chatting with friends, or the more recent messages about reducing carbon footprint.
- To reinforce to existing customers that their choice is the right one (validation of construing - customer retention)