

Cultural games change attitudes

June 24 2009

Persuasive technologies such as educational video games are more effective at changing people's attitudes or behaviours when they are adapted to a specific cultural audience.

This was the finding of recent Victoria University PhD graduate Rilla Khaled, whose research included developing two versions of a video [game](#) titled Smoke? promoting [smoking cessation](#) - one aimed at a Maori audience and the other at New Zealand Europeans.

Evaluations with high school and university students from the greater Wellington region revealed that all players preferred the elements of the game designed specifically for their culture, and that these versions increased their anti-smoking attitudes more than the culturally different game versions.

Her findings have consequences for how technologies encouraging various kinds of behaviour change should be designed.

"The kinds of attitudes people hold and the behaviours they exhibit are influenced by culture, so cultural beliefs play a large role in persuasion," says Ms Khaled.

"To date, there hasn't been a lot of persuasive technology research outside of countries which are considered to have an individualist culture. Countries like New Zealand, which are steadily becoming more ethnically diverse, are ideal testing grounds for this kind of research."

"Our first task was to establish a set of effective, culturally-relevant persuasive technology strategies, mostly for a collectivist audience - and based on this we were able to develop two versions of our video game."

Persuasive technology is any interactive technology designed to change people's attitudes or behaviours. Applications include health, sustainability and education.

Rilla Khaled graduated on 20 May.

Provided by Victoria University of Wellington

Citation: Cultural games change attitudes (2009, June 24) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-06-cultural-games-attitudes.html>

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