

What's the difference between confirmation bias and cognitive dissonance?

5 ANSWERS



Jochen (Thomas) Gruenbeck, studied at INSEAD

Answered Oct 20

Confirmation bias is our tendency to actively seek information which confirms our preexisting beliefs and disregard information which might contradict it, an example of a **cognitive bias** [↗](#). An example of **confirmation bias** would be if you believe that your spouse is a bad cook you might notice all the times he has managed to ruin your dinner, but disregard the times when has whipped a mean buttered toast. Do not worry, **restaurants are also at fault when it comes to cognitive biases**. [↗](#)

Confirmation Bias

Do you believe what you see?

Or:

Do you see what you believe?

This tendency originates from our desire to organise our world meaningfully and avoid feeling cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is a feeling of internal discomfort which occurs when your beliefs contradict your attitudes and actions or the other way around. It originates from Festinger's (1957) Cognitive Dissonance theory which suggests that in order to feel in harmony we need to feel that our beliefs and attitudes are consistent between themselves.

For example if you believe that you should eat healthily and go to McDonalds for dinner you might feel cognitive dissonance afterwards, because you have cheated on your beliefs. Likewise, if you believe that you should vote on voting day but you end up not going you might feel cognitive dissonance because you did not stay true to yourself. Beware, **cognitive biases like this one can have an impact on your swipes on your Tinder profile**. [↗](#)



Festinger further suggested that sometimes our drive to keep our beliefs and attitudes in sync might be so strong that we pursue maladaptive or irrational behaviours such as confirmation bias for example. Whereby we are willing to neglect credible information in order not to have to adapt to it.

To reduce this unpleasant feelings, [digital marketing agencies](#)  have utilised [personalised messages](#)  reduce this cognitive bias as they are tailored-made to certain groups of individuals.

Disclaimer: I work for the company

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Barbara Dautrich, Professor Emerita, Education-Psych. 25+yrs.teaching teachers

Answered Sep 25

Confirmation bias is the human tendency to “stick with what we know.” We seek to “confirm” the knowledge and beliefs we acquired and which are established (whether they are true or not).

Cognitive dissonance is the human discomfort (dissonance) we experience when we encounter new information that challenges “what we know.”

THE THINKERS: Each of us has a ‘comfort zone’ based on the stability and agreement among our thoughts and beliefs. However, curious, thoughtful people can tolerate the discomfort of opposing ideas long enough to listen/watch/read the arguments, information and evidence presented. They can evaluate the merits of the new information and adjust, modify or change their own “prior knowledge” to accommodate new and worthy information. That is how cognitive dissonance is resolved using our reasoning capacity.

THE NON-THINKERS: Those who cannot tolerate the discomfort of cognitive dissonance, will not listen/read/watch opposing information or consider the merits of the arguments put forth. This unwillingness shows their confirmation bias at work: these folks prefer to “stick with what they already know”, rejecting that which doesn't fit. Sadly, they may never gain the benefits of broader understanding and the importance of integrating new information.

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R. Eric Sawyer, Christian, B.S. Psychology 1978

Answered May 24, 2016

Confirmation bias is one subconscious strategy for minimizing the discomfort resulting from the pressure of cognitive dissonance.

Cognitive Dissonance (CD) is the psychological pressure experienced as a result of believing two (or more) things true, even though (they seem) incompatible.

Sometimes both things ARE true “my parents loved me” and “my parents punished me” seem incompatible, until I gain enough wisdom to reconcile them. The wave nature, v. the particle nature of light caused great tension (CD) until resolved. Sometimes there is a deeper truth, sometimes one of the things we “knew to be true” was just wrong. CD is the motive force that drives new discovery and new learning.

But we don't like the feeling, and often, we are unwilling to sit with it. So we do various “quick and dirty” fixes to ease that tension. One of those is “confirmation bias” which is a method of discounting any data that does not fit a foreknown conclusion.

By throwing out half the data, we avoid the CD tension of two opposing theories each having objective support.

Confirmation bias is a way to avoid the discomfort of Cognitive Dissonance.

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Answered May 24, 2016

Confirmation bias occurs when one only looks for or accepts evidence that confirms what one already believes. It's a form of emotional reasoning in which the emotional significance of a belief outweighs the emotional significance of being rational. Relationships are a useful example: most people in relationships will tend to ignore evidence that their significant other is the wrong person for them, up until they reach some critical point where they decide that their SO *is* the wrong person, and then they will begin ignoring evidence that s'he is a good person. Both the refusal to hear bad things about someone you love and the refusal to hear good things about someone you no longer love are examples of confirmation bias.

Cognitive dissonance is a theoretical explanation of things like confirmation bias. CD asserts that we have an internal need for self-consistency, so that if we find ourselves confronted with mutually inconsistent beliefs, or with beliefs that are contradicted by our own actions, we must change - sometimes radically - our beliefs and/or our actions in order to regain self-consistency. CD would say that confirmation bias occurs because we believe X, and thus reject any thought that is inconsistent with X; when we can no longer avoid thoughts inconsistent with X, then we *must* then revise our belief in X.

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Kristopher Saber, B.A. Psychology & Cognitive Science, State University of New York at Oswego (2015)

Answered Sep 25

Confirmation bias is where you see any evidence at all to back up your claims. And cognitive dissonance is where you have to conflicting thoughts or more, or a thought and a behavior. Two conflicting experiences pretty much that causes stress in the mind.

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