

## Why the Indifference?

*Martin James*



A widely recognised feature of this election campaign is the apparent indifference many voters appear to have about the entire event. Evidence of this may be found in the proportion measured by Newspoll who are uncommitted. This currently stands at 24%. One in four! The last time this level of indifference was recorded was in October of 2005.

This begs the question, what is driving this lack of commitment?

Conversion analysis has shown marketers that two forces drive consumer behaviour. The first is the traditional marketing rule that a better product will defeat a lesser product in the long term. The second is that high levels of involvement in a category lead to higher level of commitment to a product or service.

By way of example.

Let us consider a bank customer who only requires the odd transfer of funds and adequate access to ATM machines and their bank satisfies these needs. The involvement these customers have with their bank is low. These customers may be described as “comfortable”.

If their level of involvement in banking is *high* ... they have a mortgage, their savings and credit accounts with a bank ... *and* the bank is meeting their needs better than they expect their competitor to deliver, these customers are bound to be *entrenched* in their behaviour.

In the event the customer is very involved with their bank and their bank is not satisfying their needs, these customers emerge as *brittle*. These customers will endure many unsatisfactory banking events and not change their behaviour, until one day some negative contact with the bank occurs and this triggers them to change an account. This event is ‘the straw that breaks the camel’s back.’

The final group are those customers who are uninvolved in banking (few accounts and so on) who believe their bank is not performing as well as others. These customers are referred to as the “careless”.... they really do not care about their choice of bank, even though it is not satisfying their needs. The first bank that comes along and offers them a better deal will probably win their business.

This election is marked by little change in message or vision between the two parties. Indeed, each party appears to be running around after the other to match each other’s

offers and promises and pledges. Relative need satisfaction is bound to be marginal in the eyes of the electorate.

The lack of any substantive issue in this election, unlike in most others (GST, environment, Whitlam) and the quite remarkable economic calm that Australia has experienced has resulted in a very low level of electoral passion.

An electorate that fails to see any meaningful difference between the two parties and who do not believe the election to be of much import results a voting population which is either careless or comfortable about the nature of the outcome.

Ambivalence favours the incumbent. Labor will win. But we really won't care much.

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