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# **Dying For A Tan:**

**Explaining Intentions to Use Sunscreen with the Theory of Planned  
Behaviour, Threats to Appearance and Mortality,  
And the Theory of Terror Management.**

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**Katharine Elizabeth Mills**

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## Abstract

Skin cancer has become one of the most prevalent forms of cancer throughout the world (Arthey & Clarke, 1995), with New Zealand leading the world in both melanoma-related deaths and incidences. It has been indicated that 80 per cent of skin cancers could be avoided through appropriate sun prevention. Decreasing the amount of sun exposure has become the primary objective of skin cancer prevention. The present study applied the variables of the Theory of Planned Behaviour, specifically perceived behavioural control, subjective norm and attitudes, and the additional constructs of conscientiousness and anticipated regret to explain intentions for sunscreen use. An appearance-based intervention and a health-based intervention were investigated to assess changes in intentions to use a sunscreen. Finally, the Theory of Terror Management was examined to assess if this theory could help to explain sunscreen use. To examine the above issues three types of questionnaires (a mortality-based intervention, an appearance-based intervention and a control condition) were administered to beachgoers in New Zealand ( $N=145$ ) and the United Kingdom ( $N= 277$ ). The theory of planned behaviour significantly explained 53.1 per cent of participants' intentions to use a sunscreen amongst New Zealand beachgoers, and 44.9 per cent amongst British beachgoers. Specifically, raising an individual's perceived behavioural control, subjective norm and attitude towards sunscreen could be positive ways to increase sunscreen use. Furthermore, the concepts of conscientiousness and anticipated regret explained a further 14.6% and 10.9% for the New Zealand and British samples respectively. No significant results for the use of mortality and appearance-based interventions were found, and the Theory of Terror Management was not significantly found to explain sunscreen intentions. Despite various limitations, the present research has gained useful information opening the doors for future research



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