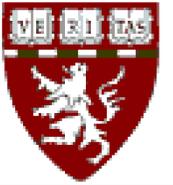


The effect of health communication tailored by personal relevance and mode of delivery on message believability and attitudes toward alcohol drinking.



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ABSTRACT: We investigated the effect of personal relevance of narrative communication on alcohol-related behavioral intentions and behavior, as well as the potential mechanisms of this effect. The results of this project will help develop efficient methods of conveying health-related information and promoting reduction of excessive drinking.

INTRODUCTION

Using narrative messages to moderate excessive drinking

- Excessive drinkers are often reluctant to believe they need to change their behavior (Slater and Rouner, 1996). Using testimonials in health communication decreases resistance (Dal Cin, Zanna et al., 2004).

Tailoring message by personal relevance

- Tailoring testimonials by recipient demographic characteristics increases persuasiveness (Kreuter, Strecher et al., 1999).
- Personal relevance affects didactic persuasion (Burnkrant and Unnava, 1989). However, its role in narrative persuasion is unclear (Braverman, 2008).
- Personal relevance is likely to increase the vividness of the story (Green, 2004) and self-referencing (Burnkrant and Unnava, 1989) that both enhance message agreement (Green & Brock, 2000; Strange and Leung, 1999).

METHODS

Participants

- 134 participants completed a web-based survey; 75 read text messages and 59 listened to audio messages.

Procedures

- The preliminary study identified 3 domains affected by alcohol-related problems: (1) Interpersonal relationships; (2) career; and (3) health
- We assessed the relative importance of each of these problems to the recipient's self-concept (IVI*: domain of importance)
- Participants were randomly assigned to 3 (IV2: message focus: relationships/career/health) X 2 (IV3: mode: audio/written) conditions.
- DEPENDENT VARIABLES (1 – 7 Likert scale):
 - Message believability
 - Persuasiveness

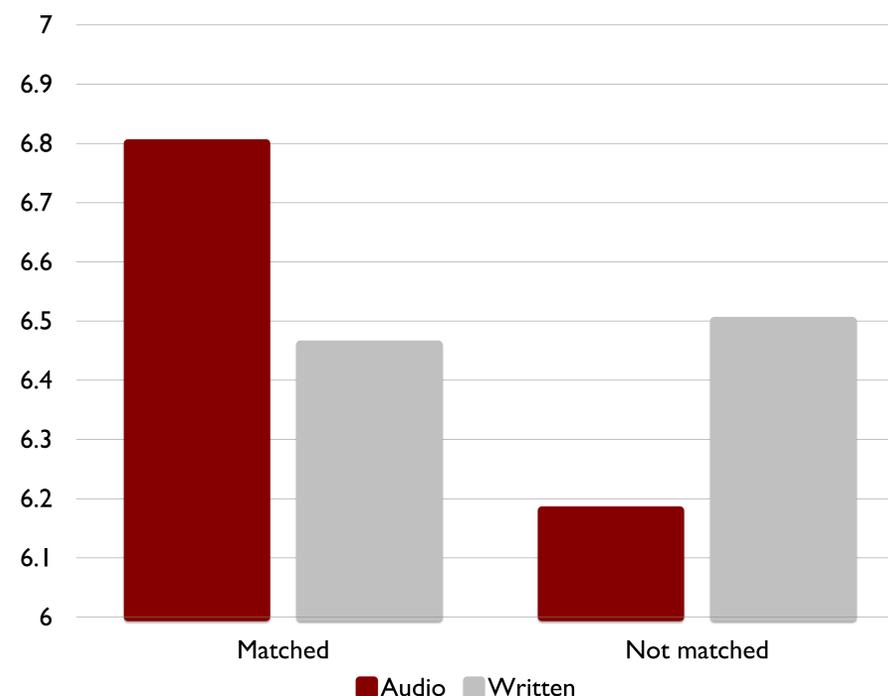
IV = Independent Variable

Hypothesis: Increasing personal relevance by matching recipients' domain of importance to the message focus enhances narrative persuasion among excessive drinkers.

RESULTS

- Relationship, career, and health messages were equally believable (Mean = 6.04, 6.16 and 5.53), and equally persuasive (Mean = 4.36, 4.23, and 4.14).
- Written messages were more believable than audio recordings (6.00 vs. 5.50, $t = 2.82, p < .01$).
- Audio and written messages were equally persuasive (Mean = 4.10 and 4.23).
- Personal relevance did not affect persuasiveness and believability of the message presented in the written mode. However, it increased persuasiveness ($B = .62, p < .03$) and believability of the audio messages ($B = .69, p < .02$).

Figure 1. Effect of matching between recipients' domain of importance and message focus on message persuasiveness.



CONCLUSIONS

- Recipients believe in the authenticity of written messages more than in audio recordings. However, this did not affect the persuasiveness of the audio recordings.
- It is possible to improve the effectiveness of narrative health communications by matching the content of the message to personal core interests.
- This effect depends on the mode of presentation. Specifically, personal relevance enhances persuasiveness of audio, but not written messages

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