

Online Consumer Reviews of Smoking Cessation Products: Implications for Public Health

Petya Eckler, PhD

University of Iowa, School of Journalism & Mass Communication

Background

- **25%** of Internet users have read online reviews of drugs or medical treatments
- **16%** of Internet users have read ranking or reviews of doctors
- **15%** of Internet users have read rankings/reviews of hospitals
- Advice from peers is becoming “a significant source of health information in the U.S.” (Fox, 2011).
- Consumer reviews are a type of electronic word of mouth (eWOM)

Hypotheses/RQs

- **H1** Positive messages → positive A_{qs} and negative messages → negative A_{qs} .
- **RQ1a** How does extremity influence A_{qs} ?
- **RQ1b** How does message appeal influence A_{qs} ?
- **H2** Positive messages → high PBC and negative messages → low PBC.
- **RQ2a** How does extremity influence PBC toward quitting smoking?
- **RQ2b** How does appeal influence PBC toward quitting smoking?

Method

Independent Variables

- Valence
- Extremity
- Appeal

Dependent Variables

- Attitude to quitting smoking
- Perceived behavioral control

116 current smokers (81.7%)

26 who quit in past 6 months (18.3%) $N = 142$

Majority of people were b/n **25 and 44** years old, $M = 33.79$, $SD = 11.52$ (19 – 69)

Contemplation: **70**

Preparation: **46**

Action: **26**

Design: 2 (valence) x 2 (extremity) x 2 (appeal) mixed design

Participants: smokers who were thinking of quitting (contemplation), preparing to quit (preparation), or had quit recently (action)

Stimuli: 16 total messages, each participant read 8.

Results

H1 Main effect of valence on A_{qs} ($F(1, 117) = 10.007$, $p = .002$, $A_{qs+} = 5.444$, $A_{qs-} = 5.221$ ($p = .002$) → **supported partially**

H2 Main effect of valence on PBC ($F(1, 134) = 11.764$, $p = .001$, $PBC_{+} = 5.601$, $PBC_{-} = 5.417$ ($p = .001$) → **supported**

Implications

Findings show potential for the promotion of smoking cessation through eWOM, because

- health eWOM can empower smokers to quit
- eWOM has low cost of implementation
- eWOM is easy to maintain
- health eWOM is effective for wide audiences