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Fake News and Successful Social Marketing Activities

An Empirical Investigation of the Covid-19 vaccination readiness

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To contain the Covid-19 pandemic, triggered by the novel coronavirus, corona vaccination is essential, according to the World Health Organization. However, vaccination skeptics and opponents are increasingly compromising the goal of urgently needed herd immunity. These are influenced by vast amounts of fake news, which can result in increased conspiracy beliefs and have the potential to decrease vaccination willingness. According to previous research, it is possible to reduce this conspiracy belief through targeted measures, but the specific interaction of conspiracy belief and social marketing activities has not been considered so far. This master's thesis therefore investigates the influence of the frequency and type of confrontation with social marketing activities on the effect of conspiracy beliefs on behavior in connection with the Corona vaccination in Germany. For this purpose, a study with N = 485 German citizens was conducted, which is based on a stimulus experiment with a 2x2 between-subjects design as well as a questionnaire. The latter refers to the Fogg Behavior Model of Dr. Brian Jeffrey Fogg. In the context of three-way-interactions, it was found that, contrary to previous research in other areas, the social marketing activities persuasion by means of altruistic approaches and specific incentives, do not achieve the desired effect and have a reducing effect on vaccination willingness. Of nine social marketing activities tested, only highlighting the threats posed by the coronavirus and educational activities achieved the desired effect of increasing vaccination willingness in the context of conspiracy beliefs. The results of this research study provide empirical evidence that the effective use of SMAs in vaccination campaign design can help increase vaccination willingness in the context of conspiracy beliefs. In addition, the findings underscore the importance of social marketing activities in the context of a pandemic and serve as a foundation for future research in this area.

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