

MASTER'S THESIS

Too Far to Care? Examine the Effects of Distance Cues on Antibiotic Abuse Prevention

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Abstract

Antibiotic abuse has long been a public concern, yet there remains a widespread lack of awareness about the associated risks. Considering the crucial role of risk perception in health communication and the growing salience of antibiotic risks, this study employs construal level theory (CLT) to explore how distance cues in health messages affect individuals' antibiotic risk perception and preventive behaviors.

Our first study examined the effectiveness of each distance dimension in the context of antibiotic risk. Through a randomized experiment ($n = 305$), we found that distance cues significantly affected participants' antibiotic risk perception and preventive behavior intentions. However, the direction and magnitude of these effects varied across dimensions.

The second study delved into the interactions between distance dimensions. In a multi-factor experiment ($n = 371$), we observed that among the multiple distance dimensions, only hypothetical distance significantly affected perceptions of antibiotic risk. Additionally, there was a marginally significant interactive effect between spatial and temporal distance. When spatial distance was close, closer temporal distance was more effective at promoting risk perception. Conversely, when spatial distance was far, far temporal distance was more effective.

This thesis demonstrates that CLT and the concept of psychological distances are vital theoretical frameworks for understanding antibiotic risk awareness and behavior. However, the impact of distances, whether single-

dimensional or multi-dimensional, varied from the findings of previous studies, underscoring the unique context of antibiotic abuse. Collectively, these findings emphasize the importance of distance-based health messages in promoting the public's risk awareness and promote responsible antibiotic use.

keywords: antibiotic abuse, construal level theory, psychological distance, risk perception