

Introduction

Can information that turns out to be false influence people's behavior? Which behaviors are more or less likely to be influenced? Previous studies have shown that people are often still influenced by information even though they have learned that it is wrong. However, there is still little research on which types of behavior are more or less susceptible to false information. As health and the consumption of chocolate are assumed to be central issues for everybody, the hypothesis is investigated within this framework.

Hypothesis

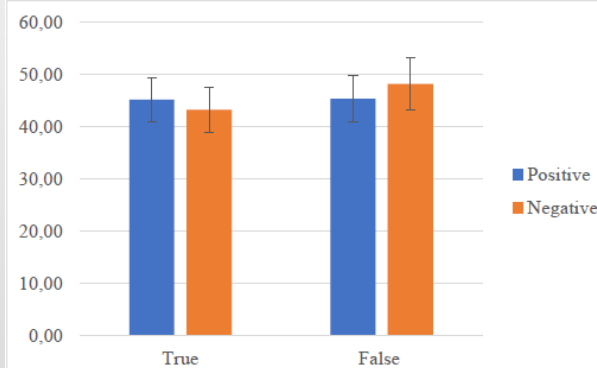
People who have enough cognitive resources to deliberately decide about their consumption amount are predominantly influenced by their explicit attitudes, which can discard false information. However, if they do not have enough cognitive resources to deliberately decide about their consumption amount, they are predominantly guided by their implicit attitudes when consuming, which are vulnerable to false information.

Method

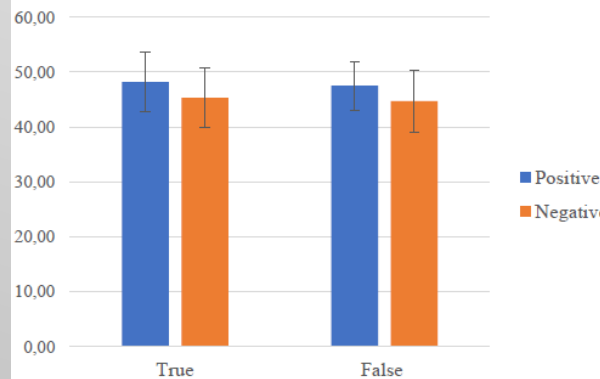
Experimental design: The experiment employed a 2 (type of dependent variable (DV): pre-ordered chocolate amount vs. amount of chocolate eaten) x 2 (chocolate text valence: positive vs. negative) x 2 (chocolate text validity: true vs. false) between-subjects factorial design.

Procedure: Participants were provided with a text containing either positive or negative consequences of chocolate consumption. After some delay, the information turned out to be either true or false. Subsequently, some participants were provided with chocolate while they were asked to watch a movie clip (depleted-cognitive-resources). Others were asked to choose an amount of chocolate before the movie clip was started (full-cognitive-resources).

Pre-Ordered Chocolate Amount: Estimated Marginal Means



Amount of Chocolate Eaten: Estimated Marginal Means



Results

No significant main effects were observed for chocolate text validity, $F(1,179) = 0.08, p = .779$, for chocolate text valence, $F(1,179) = 0.13, p = .724$ and the type of DV, $F(1,179) = 0.08, p = .784$. Additionally, none of the two-way interactions was significant (all $p > .631$). The same result could be observed for the three-way interaction between chocolate text valence, chocolate text validity and type of DV, $F(1,179) = 0.113, p = .737$. Additionally, in both conditions no significant difference was found when participants read a positive chocolate text compared to a negative one when validity information was true. To conclude, the results did not support the hypothesis. This would either lead to a rejection of the presumed explanation or could reveal potential methodological weaknesses and alternative explanations for the observed result.

References (extract)

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