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The Source Credibility of Information's Impact on Individuals' Correction of Health Misinformation

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Abstract. Nowadays, people prefer to use social media to search for information, such as health support. However, it is important to make sure the quality of some information on social media is correct, as wrong information may mislead people who do not have the ability to judge. Because of the widespread use of social media, information is disseminated in a timely manner and spreads like a virus. Many articles on social media create a channel for the spreading of pseudoscience, so that health misinformation is spreading faster than before. Because of other elements, people choose not to rectify misinformation. Source credibility is one of the key elements that influences people's correct intentions. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) can help better judge people's original intention of correcting misinformation. The ELM model can better explain how source credibility influences an individual's correct intention, and the important role source credibility has in the process of rectifying misinformation. This thesis mainly discusses the relationship between source credibility, health misinformation, and correction intention.

Keywords: Health misinformation, source credibility, social media, rectify

1. Introduction

Reliable health information is the key to supporting people's quality of life. Chou et al. define health misinformation as a fact related to health that is currently false because of a lack of sufficient scientific evidence [1].

If articles on social media are covered by health misinformation, people's health awareness will be misleading, influencing people's health decisions. Some may delay the scientific decision and treatment of diseases, posing challenges to public health management.

People rectifying health misinformation is more important in today's environment. Firstly, rectifying health misinformation prevents harmful treatment decisions, prevents people from abandoning medical care, and supports people in making the right decision when they face a serious health issue. Secondly, people's ability to judge increased significantly by correcting health misinformation. People can learn some health knowledge that helps them solve simple health problems. Finally, a decreasing number of health misinformation prevents the spread of health misinformation, which changes the way people deal with health issues. Some misinformation produces anxiety and antagonistic emotions. Correcting in time helps create an objective and rational online environment.

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Source credibility is the key to heuristic cues. People do not need to check details anymore; they can judge information by source credibility. On the one hand, if source credibility is too high, individuals trust it and are not willing to change it. On the other hand, if source credibility is too low, individuals will be more likely to query the accuracy of information. Therefore, information from less trustworthy sources includes higher correction behavior. By contrast, people tend to avoid correcting information that is shared by close friends or experts in most cases.

This article mainly discusses why source credibility will influence people's intention to correct health misinformation, and the process by which source credibility influences people's correct intention. Through this research, health misinformation can be better governed, changing the internet environment, which is now full of health misinformation, leading individuals to correct errors to combat diseases.

2. Health misinformation and correction intention

Health information is absolutely necessary in people's daily lives, and health misinformation influences people's basic ability to deal with diseases. Health misinformation is health-related factual claims that contradict scientific consensus and lack sufficient evidence to support [2].

Correction Intention is people's self-reported motivation to challenge misleading health information on social media [3]. Some individuals may successfully identify misinformation, but still lack the intention to point out since different reasons. Correction Intention is a key variable of people speaking up about the misinformation that hides in articles on social media. Without Corrective Intention, these wrong messages will keep diffusing because nobody wants to stand out and correct misinformation.

There are a few elements that may influence Correction Intention [4]. For information itself, first is the professionalism of information sources; people prefer to trust a theory or viewpoint by a professor. Second is reliability; if someone has already proven their success, individuals are not willing to correct it. For social and situational factors, one is social relations. People do not tend to correct information shared by their friends or parents in order to maintain their relationship. Individuals suffer low resistance when they correct misinformation from strangers. Thus, if the message is quite popular or is welcomed on social media, individuals are not likely to correct it because of the heavy consensus pressure.

3. Source credibility

Source Credibility refers to people's reliability about the messages rather than subjective judgment about information. It has three core aspects: expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill [5]. Expertise means the writer of the messages has expert tips that are true and useful. For instance, a doctor representative has high Expertise, and a typical internet blogger representative has low Expertise. Trustworthiness, representativeness, and fairness. For example, an official organization without business advertisement means high Trustworthiness. Goodwill means the writer publishes information aimed at helping others. Goodwill means the audience's perception is that it intends to benefit the public and cares about others rather than receiving beneficial gains.

Source credibility influences people's judgment about health information. People do not spend much time searching for evidence of health information that is published on social media. People just estimate whether it is trustworthy by the writer of other factors most of the time. Firstly, a writer or blogger with high expertise leads individuals to accept information without too much personal judgment. What is more, trustworthiness affects people's judgment; low trustworthiness raises

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people's vigilance. Finally, goodwill reflects the writer's purpose. Individuals are likely to believe a writer who truly cares about their health. Therefore, individuals tend to believe information with high expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill. These three key elements constitute Source Credibility, which impresses people's judgment about health information on social media.

4. Source credibility and correction intention

There are two routes that distinguish "the source of false assumption" and "the source of the correction information". Regarding that incorrect health information, on the one hand, if the source's credibility is high enough, individuals prefer to trust it. However, if people feel that they were misled, their correction intention will be stronger, which will prevent other people from being tricked. On the other hand, if source credibility is low, individuals do not trust the information itself, so they are not likely to correct misinformation [6].

If people who tend to correct misinformation are professional or reliable, individuals prefer to trust them, reducing the psychological concern of whether correcting mistakes might include making statements or being refuted by others, and finally increasing people's initiative to correct. On the contrary, if the source of the rumor is unreliable, even if people saw someone correct misinformation, they will avoid standing out and correcting others.

Highly reliable information is a kind of heuristic clue, which does not need people to search for evidence carefully, but simply triggers judgment directly [7]. Highly reliable information also reduces individuals' concern of making mistakes during correction, raising their willingness to engage in misinformation correction.

Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Goodwill have differences when influencing an individual's correct intention. Expertise is a cognitive clue that works efficiently in highly technical issues. Even if the intention is good, everyone will think that what the person who has low expertise says, no matter how well-intentioned, is unreliable. Trustworthiness is a moralistic clue that highly influences when the audience suspects the existence of concealment, bias, or conflicts of interest. Goodwill is an emotional clue; when an individual's professionalism and reliability may be roughly the same, goodwill decides whether the public is willing to listen to corrections or reduce resistance. In conclusion, these three clues affected different dependent variables due to their different features.

Therefore, source credibility and correction intention are highly correlated, relying on clues such as the source credibility to quickly judge information and influence their willingness to correct wrong parts.

5. Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), proposed by Petty and Cacioppo, is a classic theory in the fields of attitude change [8]. The key logic is the degree of possibility for an individual to conduct a detailed processing of information, to decide on two routes of attitude development and change.

The first route is the central route, which launches when the individual has a strong motivation and is full of recognition ability. People will search for evidence, logic, and value carefully on their own initiative. With the central route, attitudes become more stable and high-resistance.

Another route is the peripheral route, which is only launched when an individual lacks motivation and has limited ability. People do not focus on information itself, but judge it by source credibility, emotion, and other clues. Therefore, with the peripheral route, attitude is more easily influenced by other elements.

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On the one hand, with the central route, the individual judges information by the content itself, becoming more logical. On the other hand, with the peripheral route, individuals rely on the surrounding environment or scene.

People tend to focus on the content itself when they have enough knowledge and are highly concentrated on health information. Mainly because knowledge means a high level of thinking motivation, and high concentration means high-processing capacity. These two high-level elements compose ELM, which the central route helps the individual check the content itself [9].

ELM can better explain why source credibility influences correction intention [10]. People with high thinking motivation and high-processing capacity check content itself by the central route, source credibility works as a preposition signal, and the two factors have an interactive effect on correct intention. People with low thinking motivation and low-processing capacity judge content by source credibility mostly, which influences their willingness to correct health information.

6. Conclusion

As a result, source credibility has a huge influence on an individual's correct intention, which depends on the individual's personal ability. When people lack the ability, they tend to judge information's true or false by source credibility itself, which high or low lead individual's low and high motivation to rectify. If people have full recognition ability, they judge information's validity by information itself, search for evidence and logic by themselves, and the influence of source credibility is significantly reduced. However, if misinformation from a highly credible source, individuals tend to trust it, the difficulty of people correcting it in the future will be harder, and an individual's correct intention decreases distinctly.

Expertise, trustworthiness, and goodwill constitute source credibility. Expertise is a strong clue that increases an individual's correct intention easily when people lack recognition ability. On the contrary, people who have high recognition ability still dare to correct misinformation with high expertise. Trustworthiness still has influence when people have high recognition ability. Compared to expertise, the degree of decline in trustworthiness is smaller when people have high recognition ability. Goodwill relies on emotion, which only increases an individual's correct intention when they lack recognition ability.

The ELM can better distinguish between two scenes: people with high recognition ability means the central route, and people with low recognition ability means the peripheral route. By using ELM, an individual's correct intention can be better analyzed.

This research still lacks different sources of credibility in the information persuasion path. The explanation of source credibility is still limited. Thus, this research lacks data to support an individual's detailed intention when they face health misinformation. In the future, by introducing contextual factors and information characteristic variables, people can better explain the logic chain between source credibility and correct intention.

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