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It Takes Two: The Significance of Examining Both Recency and Frequency of Media Priming Effects

Abstract:

Psychological research has demonstrated that priming effects are a dual function of the recency and frequency of a prime. Examinations of media priming in health communication, however, tend to focus exclusively on recency and potentially miss valuable message effects. In this study, we offered empirical tests of priming in a health context that involve both recency and frequency in central ways. Secondary analyses of data from two experiments were conducted to test the priming effects of antismoking messages. Study 1 found that repeated exposure to news articles about successful quitting stories strengthened the association between smokers’ self-efficacy and intention to quit smoking. Study 2 showed that the negative association between former smokers’ smoking urge and intention to refrain from smoking was strengthened in response to both recency and frequency of exposure to smoking cues in antismoking public service announcements.