Distraction Effect of Smoking Cues in Health-related Message Processing: Examining Resource Allocation to Antismoking PSAs as a Function of Smoking Cues and Argument

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Abstract:

This study defined smoking cues (i.e., visual scenes related to smoking objects and smoking behaviors) as motivationally relevant stimuli to the former smoker population and examined how smoking cues influence former smokers' processing of antismoking PSAs. Findings from previous studies on smoking cues and argument strength in antismoking messages have shown that the presence of such cues undermines the persuasiveness of antismoking PSAs whose arguments are weak. By conceptualizing smoking cues and strength of arguments in terms of resource allocation, this study examined former smokers' recognition accuracy, memory strength and memory judgment to visual (excluding smoking cues) and audio information from antismoking PSAs. In line with previous findings, the results showed that the presence of smoking cues undermined former smokers' encoding of antismoking arguments – the visual and audio information that compose the main content of the messages.