

When certain persuasive techniques fail to prompt users to challenge misinformation: Lessons learnt – Extended Abstract

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Abstract

While persuasive technologies have been extensively studied in the individual focused domains, there appears to be a lack of research that assesses their effectiveness for behaviours that involve interacting with others. In this paper, we attempt to reduce the gap and study why persuasion may fail withing an example domain for interpersonal communication: the promotion of challenging misinformation. We explore the reasons why certain persuasive techniques, specifically those intended to persuade users to challenge others, have shown limited effectiveness. We applied Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT-2) framework to provide better guidance regarding the factors that influence the adoption of interfaces. Our research draws on qualitative data from an online survey with 250 respondents where each respondent evaluated seven social media user interfaces employing persuasive techniques and four online co-design sessions with 18 participants. We identify 19 rejection factors, falling under 6 main categories: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, experience and habit. The most mentioned rejection factor was about performance expectancy. Users expressed disbelief in the necessity of the techniques. Additionally, participants articulated concerns about the negative outcome of using these designs. The second most cited factor was the lack of hedonic motivation. Users found the designs and statements used in the designs non-serious, aggressive, condescending, and robotic. They expressed concerns about social influence as well. They expressed a fear that the utilization of the techniques could damage their self-image by portraying them “know-it-all” (e.g., having a badge). They also articulated their discomfort using designs that does not allow being anonymous in the interactions. Concerns related to usability are perceiving the designs effortful. In terms of experience and habit, they indicated that these designs may eventually be disregarded or overlooked after a certain point. To address these rejection factors, it is important to provide designs with emphasising more tangible benefits, trustworthy and easy-to-use. The interfaces should consider users’ privacy needs, their self-image concerns align with digital norms and the requirements of having a human touch avoiding assertiveness.

Keywords

Interpersonal relations, misinformation mitigation, persuasive techniques, persuasive systems design, nudge design

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