Challenges of the Future: Recognition, Reconciliation, and Rewards

Prof. Katherine A. McComas, Ph.D.
Dept. of Communication, Cornell University

21 September 2018
ESFA Conference on Science, Food, Society
Parma, Italy
Recognition

We cannot control the messages that audiences receive.
Example: Lean Finely Textured Beef, a.k.a. *Pink Slime*

- Used as beef filler for decades
- Attention grew out of effort to eliminate E. Coli risk in beef by injecting with ammonia
- Nicknamed “pink slime” by a former USDA meat inspector
- 2009 New York Times article first mention of “pink slime” nickname, given by former USDA meat inspector
- Picked up by Jamie Oliver in 2011
- In 2012, uproar to remove it from school lunches, fast food chains, etc.
Yet the public outcry over pink slime is justified, encouraging and impressively effective. (The response by some food safety officials that it’s misguided, and that only “experts” should be determining how food is processed, is shameful [3].) And this is how it’s going to be from now on; public pressure will increasingly determine policy, and not only in food: “Before the Internet,” says Bill Marler, a food safety lawyer, “companies and governments simply made decisions, assuming the public didn’t need to know or even care what was in their food. That is no longer the case.”
Multiple Sources/Channels

- Official
  - Government agencies
  - Elected officials
  - First responders
  - NGOs
  - Physicians

- Unofficial
  - Family members
  - Friends
  - Neighbors, other community members
  - News media
  - Web
Reconciliation

Audiences are not passive recipients but active seekers and filterers of information.
Not Everyone Will Pay Attention

• People are more likely to seek risk information and follow advice when they...
  • Recognize a gap in their knowledge,
  • Believe that people important to them would want them to know about the risk issue,
  • Believe they can access the information they need, and
  • Believe they can do something to solve the problem.

• see, e.g., Yang et al., 2014; Dunwoody & Griffin, 2015; Witte, 1992
And When They Pay Attention...

- They will filter information through
  - Heuristics and biases, including emotional responses;
  - Risk perceptions;
  - Prior beliefs about topic and source.

- see, e.g., Koriat, Lichtenstein, & Fischhoff 1980; Kunda, 1990; Nickerson, 1998; Slovic, 1987; Slovic et al., 2004; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Weinstein, 1989
Una vita che nasce teme l'alcol

Proteggere la salute del bambino è una responsabilità della madre e un impegno della società.

Con il finanziamento del Ministero della Salute nell'ambito delle azioni di informazione e prevenzione da realizzare al sensi della Legge 125/2001, e con la collaborazione della Società Italiana di Alcolologia

Alcuni numeri utili:

- Telefono Verde Alcol
- Istituto Superiore di Sanità
- Ministero della Salute
tel. 800 632000
- AICAT-Associazione Italiana dei Club Alcolici Territoriali
tel. 800 974250
- AA-Alcolisti Anonimi
tel. 06 60636620
- Gruppi Al-Anon/Alateen per familiari ed amici di alcolisti
tel. 800 087897

Consulta anche i siti
- www.salute.gov.it
- www.epicentro.iss.it/alcol
- www.dfc.unifi.it/sia
- www.alcolonline.it

Info
alcol@iss.it

proteggi il tuo bambino: in gravidanza non bere!

Molte donne sono convinte erroneamente che durante la gravidanza l'alcol attraversa la placenta e arriva all'embrione. Inoltre è stato dimostrato che questi fatti producescono effetti cerebrali irreversibili in diverse.

Svetlana Popova PhD, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t

Shannon Lange MPH, b, c, d, e, f

Charlotte Probst MS, b, c, d, e, f

Gerrit Gmel MSc, b, c, d, e, f

Prof. Jürgen Rehm PhD, b, c, d, e, f

Show more
Rewards

More ways than ever before exist to communicate with audiences.
Statement from FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb, M.D., and Center for Devices and Radiological Health Director Jeff Shuren, M.D., J.D., on agency efforts to work with tech industry to spur innovation in digital health

For Immediate Release

September 12, 2018

Statement

Owing to digital advances, we’re experiencing a reimagining of health care delivery. Consumers are now empowered to take more control of their own health information to make better informed decisions about their medical care and healthy living. These advances enable better health outcomes for patients.

This opportunity is supported by a new technological paradigm of digital health tools, like apps, that enable consumers to have more active engagement and access to real-time information about their health and activities. These tools allow consumers and providers to supersede the traditional, physical constraints of health care delivery and make the most of the opportunities offered by mobile technology.

With these advances has come a new swath of companies that are investing in these
Proceed with Caution

• Technologies will continue to outpace our abilities to understand fully their potential benefits and harms.

• Research is needed to understand potential unintended consequences of communication efforts on audiences.
Final Thoughts

- Although the communication landscape of 21st century has fundamentally changed, some fundamentals of human communication have arguably remained constant...
  - There will typically be multiple messengers for any topic;
  - Not everyone will pay attention, and people that do will actively filter messages;
  - The most effective efforts to communicate will incorporate audience values, beliefs, and behaviors into their design and delivery.