

Ambiguity and Herd Behavior Drive Uptake of New Technology Vaccines

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Abstract

Many consumers are hesitant to get a potentially life-saving vaccination due to the inherent uncertainty that vaccination choices entail. But are consumers more hesitant towards certain types of vaccines than others, and why? We present four experimental studies ($N_{\text{total}}=448$) in which we test whether consumers are biased towards vaccines that deploy new technology. We explore the underlying reasons for and propose a strategy of how to overcome this hesitancy. Our findings demonstrate that consumers are on average willing to trade-off 19% in vaccine efficacy to avoid a new technology vaccine. This hesitancy is mediated by concerns about uncertain side effects and moderated by ambiguity aversion. A health marketing communication strategy based on herd behavior, providing information about increasing immunization rates, can effectively reduce ambiguity and increase uptake of new technology vaccines. We recommend adaptive communication strategies for new technology vaccines considering the population immunization level to reduce ambiguity.

Keywords: *Vaccines; Ambiguity; Technology*

Track: Consumer Behaviour