Receptive to AI: Artificial Intelligence Can Promote Openness to Opposing Views

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Receptive to AI:
Artificial Intelligence Can Promote Openness to Opposing Views

Abstract

Exposure to counterattitudinal information has been shown to yield mixed effects on attitude polarization. The current research explores the differential impact of such information when generated by artificial intelligence (AI) versus human sources. While prior work highlights a general aversion to AI for decision-making, our research reveals a distinct preference for AI in providing counterattitudinal messages. Across four pre-registered studies (N = 2,116), we find that when people receive counterattitudinal messages on potentially polarizing issues, AI sources are perceived as less biased, more informative, and having less persuasive intent than human sources. This leads to greater receptiveness to counterattitudinal messages when those messages come from AI rather than human sources. In addition, we find preliminary evidence that receiving counterattitudinal messages from an AI (versus human) source can diminish outgroup animosity and facilitate attitude change.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, persuasion, receptiveness

Track: Consumer Behaviour

Main Text

Political polarization is a pressing issue in recent decades (Voelkel et al., 2023). The manifestation of polarization is that individuals are unreceptive to and avoid opposing perspectives and disagreeing others (Chen & Rohla, 2018; Minson & Dorison, 2022). In response to rising polarization, considerable research has been directed to understanding receptiveness to opposing views. Our research advances this literature in two ways. First, we explore the potential of artificial intelligence models (AI) to combat polarization and increase people's receptiveness to opposing positions and individuals. Second, we demonstrate that felt receptiveness can be driven by perceptions of source bias, informativeness, and persuasive intent, three factors that have yet to be examined in this domain.

In present research, four pre-registered experiments (N = 2,116) reveal that, contrary to the well-established notion that people prefer human over AI input (Cadario, Longoni, & Morewedge, 2021; Dietvorst, Simmons, & Massey, 2015; Longoni, Bonezzi, & Morewedge, 2019; Promberger & Baron, 2006), people prefer AI over human sources when receiving counterattitudinal messages, holding constant the content of those messages. Specifically, people feel more receptive to the opposing position, report greater willingness to seek out and share opposing information, and even show reduced outgroup animosity after receiving counterattitudinal messages from AI rather than human sources. These effects are driven by perceptions that AI is less biased (e.g., more objective), more informative (e.g., more knowledgeable), and has less persuasive intent (e.g., less motivation to persuade the recipient).

Study 1A (N = 457) examined the effect of AI versus human sources on perceptions of counterattitudinal messages. All participants received the same counterattitudinal message on the topic of universal healthcare, but they were led to believe that the message came from AI (ChatGPT) or a human source (another study participant). We found that participants perceived the AI source to be less biased and more informative and to have less persuasive intent than the human source (bias: M_{ChatGPT} = 4.14 vs. $M_{\text{study participant}}$ = 4.64, p < .001; informativeness: M_{ChatGPT} = 6.16 vs. $M_{\text{study participant}}$ = 5.30, p < .001; persuasive intent: M_{ChatGPT} = 5.17 vs. $M_{\text{study participant}}$ = 5.59, p = .02; see Figure 1).

Study 1B (N = 449) sought to replicate these findings when the human source was known to be more informative. Participants received the same counterattitudinal message on universal healthcare, but it was described as coming from ChatGPT or an expert on this topic. Results showed that participants perceived ChatGPT to be less biased, more informative, and have less persuasive intent than the expert source (bias: M_{ChatGPT} = 4.21 vs. M_{expert} = 5.06, p

< .001; informativeness: $M_{ChatGPT} = 6.35$ vs. $M_{expert} = 5.82$, $p = .003$; persuasive intent: $M_{ChatGPT} = 5.26$ vs. $M_{expert} = 6.54$, $p < .001$).

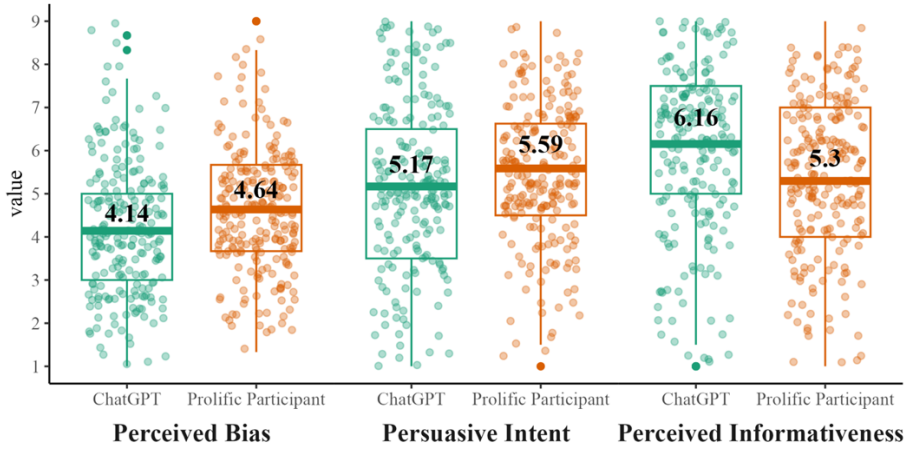

Figure 1. Study 1 Results.

Study 2 ($N = 529$) examined the effect of AI versus human sources on receptiveness, sharing intentions, and information-seeking. Participants received a counterattitudinal message about vaccinations and were led to believe that it came from an AI model (Bard, in this case) or a social media influencer. Here too, participants perceived the AI source to be less biased, more informative, and have less persuasive intent than the influencer source (all p's < .001). Participants also reported greater receptiveness, sharing intentions, and information-seeking intentions in the AI condition compared to the influencer condition (all p's < .001, see Figure 2). Parallel mediation analyses revealed that the effects of the source manipulation on receptiveness, sharing intentions, and information-seeking were driven by perceptions of bias, informativeness, and persuasive intent.

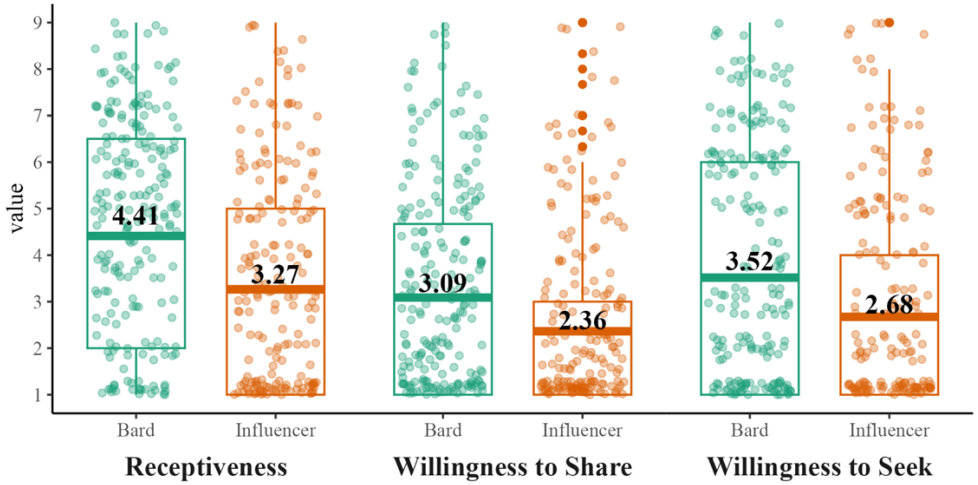

Figure 2. Study 2 Results.

In Study 3 ($N = 665$), we investigated the effect of AI versus human sources on outgroup animosity. Specifically, we measured how people perceived an out-group member

after receiving a counterattitudinal message on the issue of gun control from an AI or a group of people. All participants received the same counterattitudinal message, but it was described as coming from either PaLM 2 (an AI model) or an advocacy group. We found that participants reported greater receptiveness and sharing intentions in the AI condition than in the advocacy group condition (p's < .001). Additionally, participants indicated a warmer, more positive feeling toward the out-group on a feeling thermometer, and perceived the outgroup as having more positive traits, in the AI condition compared to the advocacy group condition (feeling thermometer: $M_{\text{PaLM 2}} = 40.52$ vs. $M_{\text{Advocacy } \textit{group}} = 36.03$, $p = .02$; positive traits: $M_{\text{PaLM 2}} = 4.81$ vs. $M_{\text{Advocacy } \textit{group}} = 4.45$, $p = .03$).

To summarize, in contrast to the well-established notion of algorithm aversion, this research illustrates the potential value of using AI to deliver counterattitudinal messages, which can enhance people's perceptions of those messages and boost people's receptiveness to opposing views and disagreeing others. In addition to having practical implications, this research contributes to a rapidly growing literature on receptiveness. Indeed, it identifies source factors as important determinants of receptiveness, providing the first evidence that perceptions of source bias, informativeness, and persuasive intent can shape felt receptiveness and reduce polarization.

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