The interactive influence of individuals’ initial attitudes and affective-cognitive persuasion on fruits and vegetables consumption

**Introduction**
- Poor rates of fruits and vegetables consumption remain despite many promotional campaigns (e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).
- Having incompatible attitudes with a message’s position can increase resistance to it (Clarke, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 2008) but few studies have examined affect and belief separately.
- A pilot study revealed that fruits and vegetables is a cognitive meta-basis topic which creates more interests to process beliefs than emotions (See, Petty, & Fabrigar, 2008).
- Affective/cognitive information are more accessible for affective/cognitive-based attitudes (Giner-Sorolla, 2004). Thus, a belief-focused message may increase accessibility to recall counter-arguments for those with poorer attitudes to defend their position but not an emotion-focused message.

**Research Objective**
- Examine how to improve health persuasion via the interactions between one’s initial attitudes and affective-cognitive focused message.

**Hypothesis**
- For those with less positive attitudes, A belief-focused message will be less persuasive than an emotion-focused message, but both message should be equally persuasive for those with more positive attitudes.

**Participants:** N = 290 NUS students 
(M_Age = 21.54, SD = 2.20, 201 females, 89 males).

**Design:** 2 (less vs. more positive initial attitudes) × 2 (emotion-focused vs. belief-focused message).

**Procedures**
1. **Initial Attitudes (M = 4.32, SD = 1.19, α = .90):**
   e.g. My attitudes toward eating fruits and vegetables are ________. (1 = negative, 7 = positive)
2. **Message Type:** Participants read one of two messages.
   - Emotion-Focused.
   - Belief-Focused.

- Darren always feel happy and the secret to his optimism is simple. He knows that eating fruits and vegetables releases serotonin, “the happy hormone”.
- Science has shown that eating fruits and vegetables has many useful outcomes. Indeed, fruits and vegetables has nutrients to boost our body’s functioning.

3. **Behavior Intentions (M = 5.32, SD = 2.03, α = .97):**
   e.g. I ________ intend/plan/want to eat 4 servings of fruits and vegetables (1 = definitely do not, 9 = definitely do).

**Results**
Those with less positive attitudes showed less consumption intentions for belief-focused than emotion-focused message, \( \beta = -17, r(286) = -2.98, p = .003, \rho^2 = -.12 \).
Those with more positive attitudes showed similarly high consumption intentions for both message types, \( \beta = .01, r(286) = 0.24, p = .81, \rho^2 = .01 \).

**Conclusion**
- A tailored persuasion may backfire for those with poorer attitudes toward fruits and vegetables.
- More generally, one’s initial attitudes may affect the efficacy of affect-cognitive persuasion. Thus, one’s initial attitudes can guide message tailoring to improve attitudes and behaviors.
- Future studies can examine this in affect meta-basis topics.

**References**

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