Fear Appeals in Road Safety Advertisements: Reactions of University Students

Íris de Almeida

Lisbon, 27th May 2010
Fear Appeals in Road Safety Advertisements

OUTLINE

1. GOALS
2. EARLIER WORK
3. METHOD
4. RESULTS
5. CONCLUSIONS
6. STUDY LIMITATIONS
7. FUTURE RESEARCH
1. GOALS

18-29 years old group

Threat Level  →  Fear  →  Efficacy

Sensation Seeking

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www.irf2010.com
2. EARLIER WORK

- Fear
  - Emotional response to a threat (Anxiety)

- Fear Appeals
  - Threat + Action

- Fear/Persuasion
  - Different Models
  - Relevant Threat

- Sensation Seeking
  - Risky Behaviours
3. METHOD

- Quasi-experimental study with non-equivalent group design

- Participants → 220 university students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUPS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Driving License</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP 1 (low threat)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84,6%</td>
<td>15,4%</td>
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<td>58,1%</td>
<td>41,9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>GROUP 2 (high threat)</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21,4%</td>
<td>78,6%</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86,4%</td>
<td>13,6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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3. METHOD

- **Stimuli – Television Spots:**

  - Low Threat: Spot_Lapis
  - High Threat: Spot_Helder
4. RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat Level – Relationship with:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-reported Fear</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• $t = -10,44$  Sig=0,00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Difference between groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived susceptibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $F(1,218)=108,94$  Sig=0,00  Eta$^2=0,33$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difference between groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived severity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $F(1,218)=18,92$  Sig=0,00  Eta$^2=0,08$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• $F(1,218)=11,95$  Sig=0,00  Eta$^2=0,05$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Difference between groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. RESULTS

Threat Level – Relationship with:

Self-efficacy

- $F(1,218)=0.51$  Sig=0.48  Eta$^2=0.00$
- $F(1,218)=0.70$  Sig=0.41  Eta$^2=0.00$
- $F(1,218)=14.93$  Sig=0.00  Eta$^2=0.07$

Intentions to adopt a safe driving

- $F(1,215)=20.79$  Sig=0.00  Eta$^2=0.09$
- Difference between groups
4. RESULTS

Sensation Seeking – Relationship with:

**Self-reported Fear**
- $R=-0.04$  $\text{Sig}=0.51$
- No statistical significance

**Attitudes towards safe driving**
- $R=-0.09$  $\text{Sig}=0.17$
- $R=-0.05$  $\text{Sig}=0.49$
- $R=-0.12$  $\text{Sig}=0.49$
- No statistical significance
4. RESULTS

Sensation Seeking – Relationship with:

**Self-efficacy**
- R=-0.10 Sig=0.14;
- R=0.15 Sig=0.03;
- R=0.02 Sig=0.80
- No significant result

**Intentions to adopt a safe driving**
- R=-0.06 Sig=0.35
- No statistical significance

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5. CONCLUSIONS

- A strong fear appeal leads to a high perception of threat

- Susceptible threat to a target is more important than the fear appeal itself

- Sensation Seeking turned out to be of no significance
6. STUDY LIMITATIONS

- Forced exposure to the stimulus
- Convenience sample
- Non-random distribution among groups
- Lack of control group
7. FUTURE RESEARCH

- Different samples
  - Young people with other occupations
  - Young people outside urban centers

- Different analysis of Sensation Seeking
- Evaluation of behaviour change
Fear Appeals real efficacy is only measured by real behaviour change!

Thank You!