

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Department of Information Systems, Business Statistics and Operations Management

Webinar Announcement



Sympathy to the Seemingly Needy: A Large-Scale Field Experiment on Social Influence and Non-Social Signals in Medical Crowdfunding

by

Miss Yun Young HUR
Georgia Institute of Technology

Date : Monday, 2 November 2020
Time : 9:00 am - 10:30 am (Hong Kong Time)
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Zoom Details : Meeting ID: 983 1981 2598
Passcode: 009780



Abstract:

While existing research has examined the role of social influence on various user behavior, such as product adoption, reviews and purchases, there is a lack of studies on how social influence interacts with inherent non-social cues, such as inherent attributes. In this study, we attempt to fill in this gap, using medical crowdfunding as the research context, where information asymmetry between donors and fundraisers potentially hinders donation decisions. We first evaluate how donors leverage inherent fundraising case information, such as patient age, gender and type of disease, to assess the validity of the case. Then, through a large-scale randomized field experiment, we examine the impact of social influence on users' willingness to donate and how this impact changes, depending on the presence of non-social signals with varying signal strength. Our results show that the weaker non-social signal, patient gender, influences the likelihood to donate only for cases lacking stronger non-social signals. More specifically, when social influence is present, donors' willingness to donate increases but the impact of the weaker non-social signal is reduced. In contrast, for cases with multiple strong non-social signals, neither social influence nor patient gender changes the willingness to donate; for cases with a single strong non-social signal, social influence improves the likelihood to donate, but patient gender does not. Overall, our findings indicate that the informational value of social influence is dependent on the presence of alternative information sources, such as inherent strong or weak non-social cues. These results also provide insights on how to leverage social influence, considering the relative informational value compared with inherent non-social cues. The informational value of social influence is particularly important for cases lacking the strong non-social signals to appear in strong need of help. Our results also provide insights on better promoting equal chances for medical crowdfunding.

Bio:

Yun is a fifth-year PhD Candidate in the IT Management area at Scheller College of Business, under the supervision of Professor Jeffrey Hu. Yun's recent research interests include heterogeneity of social influence, optimization of healthcare crowdfunding strategies, and effective social advertising. One of her papers on the heterogeneity of social influence in the presence of non-social signals has recently won a first-place award at INFORMS Social Media Analytics Best Student Paper Contest. She also received the CIBER Doctoral Research Award at the Scheller College (2019-2020) and Sandra and Ronald Slaughter Ph.D. Fellowship (2019-2020). Yun received her master's degree in Management Information Systems from Seoul National University, where she maintained a full fellowship during her study; and a bachelor's degree in Economics and Communication Studies from UCLA. Yun speaks many languages fluently, including English, Korean, and Japanese. She also enjoys photography and illustration drawing.