SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?
An analysis of risk communication and fire safety

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Communication goals

- Increase risk awareness of how to act in cases of fire
- Increase intention to act according to desired behavior
- Decrease intention to act according to undesired behavior
Challenges

• Communicating “passive” behavioral intent
• Designing for fear without decreasing institutional trust
• Inducing fear with text rather than vivid imagery
Large-scale experiment in Sweden

- LORE, University of Gothenburg
- Citizen Panel with 60,000 respondents
- Web questionnaires sent to 3,800 respondents
- 67 percent response rate

Maria Andreasson (LORE)
Improving the odds of Risk Communication

Original Risk Communication

Experimental Risk Communication
Design of Risk Communication

Group 0
Neutral scenario
Messages:
• Main

Group 1
Fear appeal scenario
Messages:
• Main

Group 2
Fear appeal scenario
Messages:
• Main
• Action

Group 3
Fear appeal scenario
Messages:
• Main
• Action
• Calming
Main messages

The smoke in the stairwell can kill you

1. Close the door – the smoke is poisonous and hot
2. Call 112 and alert about the fire
3. Stay in your apartment
   - The fire dept. helps you get out
The smoke in the stairwell can kill you

1. Close the door – the smoke is poisonous and hot
2. Call 112 and alert about the fire
   - Cover vents with wet towels
   - Warn others and localize the fire
3. Stay in your apartment
   - The fire dept. helps you get out
Calming messages

The smoke in the stairwell can kill you

1. Close the door – the smoke is poisonous and hot
   - Cover vents with wet towels
   - Warn others and localize the fire

2. Call 112 – the door handles 30 min
   - Graphic clock with 30 min

3. Stay in your apartment
   - Seek attention from window
   - The fire dept. comes in time
   - The fire dept. helps you get out
Design of Risk Perception

Affective

Cognitive

Behavioral

Internalization + Response efficacy + Desired intent +

Fear + Self-efficacy + Fear control response + -

Response efficacy + Desired intent +

Self-efficacy + Fear control response + -
Manipulation effects

- Fear arousal works, but the most efficient risk communication combine fear arousal, self-protective action and response efficacy
Discussion in response to the challenges

- Desired “passive” behavioral intent is best communicated through calming rather than activating – is this general knowledge?
- Fear appeal does not increase worry, but is there still a paradox of risk communication in the possible decrease of institutional trust?
- It is possible to induce fear with text messages