

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Consumer Misperceptions about the Sources of Societal Problems By



Prof. Yu Ding
Stanford University

Date : 16 Jul 2026 (Thu)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : M802, PolyU

Abstract

Consumers face pressing societal problems, from climate change to the opioid epidemic. This brief commentary offers a broad descriptive analysis of consumers' beliefs about the composition of such problems and investigates how correcting misperceptions alters cause support. Pairing survey experiments with government data (N=6,812), we observe misperceptions about the prevalence of the sources of six problems: gun deaths (e.g., % from rifles vs. handguns), carbon emissions, mass incarceration, opioid overdoses, unauthorized immigration, and unemployment. Correcting these misperceptions increases support for addressing sources that were initially underestimated and decreases support for sources that were initially overestimated. These effects are not fully explained by efficacy beliefs; even when consumers receive explicit information about where their support would have a larger impact, prevalence information still shifts preferences. Rather, the findings suggest consumers hold normative beliefs that society ought to allocate resources to more prevalent sources. We also show how consumers' political affiliation predicts who holds misperceptions and whose support is most sensitive to belief corrections. We close by discussing how charity platforms and policymakers can influence consumer cause support by disseminating public, reliable data on the composition of societal problems.

Prof. Yu Ding's research focuses on trust. He investigates how people decide what, when, and whom to trust, examining how individuals set and adjust their standards based on the situation. His work addresses how social and informational contexts—such as the spread of misinformation—influence public trust in authority (e.g., science), consumer trust in brands (e.g., news media), and trust in others (e.g., strangers or AI agents). Prof. Ding employs diverse methods to study these problems, including lab experiments, field studies, archival data analyses, and statistical and machine learning techniques. His goal is to clarify the psychological processes behind trust and to design systems and interventions that help people to calibrate their trust more effectively.

All interested are welcome.



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