Communicating Preventive Health: Health Locus of Control, Health Literacy, and Multivitamin Consumption Intentions in Greece and Austria

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Consumer use of dietary supplements is widespread, yet the psychological mechanisms shaping preventive health consumption remain underexplored in communication research. This study examines how internal health locus of control (IHLOC), health literacy (HL), perceived benefits, and attitudes influence multivitamin consumption intentions in Greece (n=287) and Austria (n=140). Using PLS-SEM, we find that while IHLOC and HL are key distal predictors, their impact on intentions is largely mediated by benefits and attitudes. Significant cross-cultural differences emerged: the path from attitudes to intentions was significantly stronger in Austria, while Greeks showed higher direct sensitivity to IHLOC. The findings suggest that health communication should be tailored: empowerment-framed messaging is vital for high-IHLOC consumers, while plain-language, numeracy-friendly content is essential for low-literacy groups. By aligning individual psychological resources to cultural contexts, this research advances understanding of how self-care behaviors are communicatively constructed and differentially processed in European consumer markets.

Keywords: Health locus of control; health literacy; multivitamin intentions; cross-cultural health communication; preventive health behavior; structural equation modeling