

Quality (Health Coverage)

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KEYWORDS

quality, health, diversity, completeness, relevance, understandability, objectiveness

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

To judge the quality of the media coverage of health information, research mostly focuses on ten criteria: adequately discussion of costs, quantification of benefits, adequately explanation and quantification of potential harms, comparison of the new idea with existing alternatives, independence of sources and discussion of potential conflicts of interests, avoidance of disease mongering, review of methodology or the quality of the evidence, discussion of the true novelty and availability of the idea, approach or product as well as giving information that go beyond a news release (Schwitzer, 2008, 2014; Smith et al., 2005). Other quality dimensions applied in content analyses of health news coverage are diversity, completeness, relevance, understandability and objectiveness (Reineck, 2014; Reineck & Hölig, 2013).

These criteria are increasingly relevant as people use online health information more frequently and in addition to the information from their physician for medical decision making (Wang, Xiu, & Shahzad, 2019). Thus, analyzing the quality of health content in the media coverage becomes even more relevant. As Schwitzer (2017) points out, there is a variety of quality problems due to hurried, incomplete, poorly researched news.

To measure quality, the content of health news coverage can be compared to content of the original research paper (e.g., Ashorkhani et al.,

2012) or the quality of media content is continuously judged by journalist, medical experts or independent organizations such as HealthNews-Review with respect to different criteria (e.g., Schwitzer, 2008; Selvaraj et al., 2014).

FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Online health information, medical decision making, journalism studies

REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER

METHODS

Focus group discussions with journalists, editors-in-chief and news gatekeepers (Ashorkhani et al., 2012), focus group discussions with consumers of health information (Marshall & Williams, 2006)

EXAMPLE STUDIES:

Anhäuser & Wormer (2012); Reineck (2014); Reineck & Hölig (2013); Schwitzer (2008); Wormer (2014)

INFORMATION ON REINECK & HÖLIG, 2013

Authors: Dennis Reineck, Sascha Hölig

Research question: Which factors contribute to the quality of health journalism?

Object of analysis: Sample of all health-related articles in four German newspapers: Süddeutsche Zeitung (n = 167), Die Welt (n = 426), Frankfurter Rundschau (n = 219) and die tageszeitung (n = 84)

Time frame of analysis: March, 1, 2010 to February, 28, 2011

INFO ABOUT VARIABLES

Variables: Variables defining five dimensions of quality for health-related newspaper articles, deduction of a quality index: coding of 0 to 100 points for each indicator of the different variab-



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les, deduction of a quality index for each article based on these points

Level of analysis: news article

Quality dimension	Variable	Indicator(s)
Diversity (rH= 0.78)	Quantitative diversity	Length of the article
	Source diversity	Number of sources
	Opinion diversity	Discussion of contrary opinions
Completeness (rH= 0.86)	Journalistic completeness and scientific completeness, risks	For diseases: information about prevention, symptoms and remedies
	Scientific completeness	For research studies: information about method, sample and results
	Risks	For treatment options: addressing of risks and side effects
Relevance (rH= 0.85)	Source credibility	Sources with the highest reputation
	Usefulness	Take-home-messages, references to additional information
	Newsworthiness	News factors (e.g., topicality)
Understandability (rH= 0.86)	Simplicity	Simplicity vs. complexity of language
	Structure	Well-structured vs. inadequately structured presentation
	Conciseness	Concise vs. circuitous presentation
	Storytelling	Storytelling vs. matter-of-fact presentation
Objectiveness (rH= 0.95)	Emotionalization	Emotional language
	Dramatization	Dramatization of information

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