

Disinformation in the context of health information behaviour

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Abstract

During the Covid-19-pandemic, health information behaviour received much attention and was put into focus, especially as much disinformation around the topic spread on social media and in different information sources. Disinformation is misleading, misunderstanding or even completely false information that can harm a person, social group, organisation or even a country and potentially have a dangerous impact (Fallis, 2015). Although the concept of disinformation has been researched in information behaviour before the pandemic (e.g. Karlova and Fisher, 2013), it is increasingly discussed in other research fields and the health domain due to its potential to harm. Disinformation in the health context can lead to poor health choices and can inhibit efforts to relieve health crises, for example mistrust in vaccinations against Covid-19 disease, and impacts health information literacy (e.g. Darrin and Elliot, 2020; De Gani et al., 2022). The need for strategies to counteract the harmful influences of disinformation in the health domain is inevitable. For that, we need to better understand the behaviour that results in disinformation and evolves around it.

The panel will discuss the impact of disinformation on health information behaviour and health information seeking. We discuss the following questions:

- 1. Which information behaviours have been distilled in a health-threatening crisis, and what are their defining factors?*
- 2. How does disinformation influence our understanding of health information behaviour and health information seeking?*
- 3. How can health information behaviour models be adapted to integrate disinformation?*
- 4. Which strategies can be taken to counteract harmful influences in this sphere?*

Summary of content and contribution to the ISIC 2022

The aim of the panel is to start a discussion on health information behaviour and seeking in the context of disinformation that arise during times of crisis. Furthermore, we would like to determine factors that influence behaviour and how we as information scientists need to adapt our understanding of information behaviour.

Panel Members and Moderator

The panel will be moderated by Dr. Maria Henkel. She is a researcher at the web science department of ZBW Leibniz Information Centre for Economics in Kiel, Germany. Dr. Henkel has a research background in information literacy and information literacy education through knowledge institutions, as well as health information behaviour and data privacy.

The following panel members committed to participate in the panel:

Isto Huvila is professor in Information Studies at the department of ALM at Uppsala University in Sweden. His research interest lies in the area of information and knowledge management, as well as social and participatory information practices. His work on health information practices and e-health is of particular interest for this panel as he researches information seeking behaviour of cancer patients.

Thomas Mandl is a professor for Information Science at the department of University of Hildesheim. His research interests include information retrieval, human-computer interaction and internationalisation of information technology. He contributes his experience from current research projects about science communication and information behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Juliane Stiller is a researcher at the non-profit organisation Grenzenlos Digital e.V. in Berlin, Germany and project leader of the DESIVE² project that develops a disinformation behaviour model for health information based on surveys and interviews. In the panel, she will present the project and its perspective on disinformation.

Kristina Eriksson-Backa is research leader in Information Studies at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. She has long experience of research on health information behaviour and health information literacy, and more recently she has focused on media and information literacy in relation to mis- and disinformation.

Elena Macevičiūtė is a researcher at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science, University of Borås in Sweden. She has long experience of research on information and communication research areas, and more recently she has focused on digital inequality and literacy as well as citizen engagement in hazardous contexts.

References

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