

Varying Amounts of Information in Health News Headlines Can Affect User Selection and Interactivity

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Motivation

- 70% of Americans are interested in health news (Pew Research Center, 2017)
- Only 17% of them actively seek health news
- This study examines how to increase audiences' engagement with health news

Problem Formulation

Two categories of headlines

High Informative (HI)

- Answers 3 or more W/H questions
 - *Vegetarians might have higher risk of stroke than meat eaters, study says*

Low Informative (LI)

- Answers less than 3 W/H questions
 - *These people have higher risk of stroke*

Goal

- To examine the relation between informativeness and user engagement with health news headlines

Research Questions

1. Does information level in health news headlines affect user selection?
2. Are there primary reasons for users' selection of high informative versus less informative health news headlines?
3. Does user interactivity (sharing, liking, commenting) with more informative health news headlines differ from interactivity with less informative headlines?

Theoretical Framework

Incidental exposure

"There is a potential for an online user to encounter unexpected content as they browse or scan content."

Methods

- An online survey with 308 respondents
- 120 headlines collected from six mainstream news organizations
- Three coders first recorded the number of W/H questions in each headline and then manipulated for high and low informativeness
- Eight headline pairs to examine reasons for selection and interactivity

Results

- Respondents indicated a constant preference for high information headlines because they provided more details.
- Respondents were more likely to share low informative headlines because they generated curiosity.

Reason	HI	LI		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t	sig
Informative	61.6 (4.7)	22.7 (7.1)	12.1	<.001 **
Curiosity	13.8 (2.4)	34.8 (7.9)	-6.7	<.001 **
Interesting	12.6 (3.4)	23.2 (7.5)	-3.4	<.001 **
Personalized	12.0 (4.2)	19.4 (5.3)	-2.9	.01 *

Table 1. Mean percentages and t-test results for selecting high versus low informative headlines

Activity	HI	LI		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t	Sig.
Like	33 (6)	39.4 (8.8)	-1.6	0.13
Share	28.5 (7.3)	38.6 (7.4)	-2.6	0.02 *
Comment	8.5 (3.7)	13.5 (6.5)	-1.8	0.09

Table 2. Means and t-tests comparing reasons for interactions with selected headlines

