

INFODEMIC OR AN EXCESSIVE AMOUNT OF INACCURATE INFORMATION PUBLISHED ABOUT THE COVID - 19 PANDEMIC

ABSTRACT

A pandemic of the coronavirus or COVID-19 virus struck us in December 2019 and spread to Europe and then worldwide during 2020. In addition to the health pandemic, we were accompanied by a pandemic of a lot of information, misinformation and so-called fake news, which is why the World Health Organization declared an infodemic. In parallel with the fight against the pandemic, in terms of timely, accurate and transparent information, the media around the world also fought against the infodemic and professionally followed the developments in the field related to the disease itself. They also followed the press conferences of the National Civil Protection Headquarters daily, thus trying to amortize the uncertainty of the public regarding the development of the pandemic. However, their work was significantly hampered by numerous online communication platforms, which were initially flooded with a lot of inaccurate, fabricated and sensationalist information, and which was also monitored by media content consumers for better information. Precisely such announcements were the reason for the proclamation of the infodemia because they introduced cacophony into the media discourse. Many countries have launched portals to verify the accuracy of the information or fake news seekers to verify the facts published on online communication platforms. In the pursuit of accurate information, the traditional media also pointed to infodemic news and tried to strike a balance in the accuracy of information through their media channels. In this paper, we will analyze the concept of infodemic and how to deal with it. We will also analyze how the media from our neighbouring countries followed the phenomenon of infodemic, we will analyze the statements of scientists who were often in a collision, which left room for false news and misinformation in an already chaotic time. By descriptive analysis of the content of the media, we will give a cross-section of media coverage of the infodemic in the Republic of Croatia and neighbouring countries. We will also use the content analysis method to analyze the statements of representatives of the National Civil Protection Headquarters and scientists published in the first wave of the collision pandemic, which may have affected the increase in inaccurate and unverified and misinterpreted information.

Keywords: infodemic; fake news; traditional media; online media; content analysis; scientists