

Socially Shared Health Information

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ABSTRACT

In this PhD project, I am investigating how health organizations are sharing health information on social media. My PhD project is divided into two parts, but in this paper, I will only focus on the first part: To understand current practices of how health organizations engage with health information and users on social media (empirical studies 1,2,3) and to develop a theoretical model for how it is done efficiently and effectively. I have currently conducted and published on two empirical studies (1,2). I am in the process of collecting data for a revised version of empirical study (2) and for empirical study (3).

Author Keywords

Health Information; Big Data Analytics; Social Media; Digital Health; Digital Sharing; Social Influence.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Some of the most serious global health issues today are chronic diseases such as diabetes and obesity [1,2]. Some important risk factors for these diseases are peoples' behaviors such as physical inactivity and inadequate diets. Generally, most people know what is considered healthy and unhealthy behavior. Despite knowing this, many people continue to make questionable health choices and do venture into destructive or risky behaviors. Health organizations have tried to influence peoples' behaviors through health campaigns on traditional media, but generally they have not been efficient and effective. From social sciences studies and studies of social influence [3], I believe there are good indications that people might change their behaviors, if they experience social influence.

Social Media harness the dynamics of social networks and social influence in an online setting. Facebook is arguably an integrated part of many peoples' social lives with more

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than 2 billion active monthly users [4]. Hence, Facebook arguably knows more about what people think, feel and do than any other organization on Earth. It might therefore be important to understand how health organizations and users interact with health information on Facebook.

I term health information shared on social media platforms as “Socially Shared Health Information” (SSHI) [5]. Each research question (RQ1-4) is designed to address a central aspect of the phenomenon, which I have termed SSHI. The first two research questions are:

- RQ1: What are the goals and critical success factors for organizations engaging in SSHI?
- RQ2: What are the structural, temporal, social, linguistic, and computational aspects of the artifacts resulting from SSHI?

My PhD project focus on how health organizations (, which are grouped into six domain specific health areas: General health, lung health, heart health, diabetes, cancer and physical activity) in Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom and United States, interact with health information and users on Facebook.

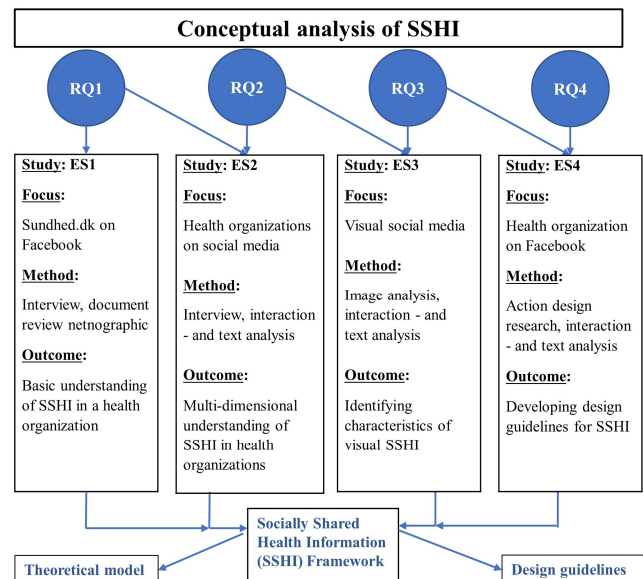


Figure 1. The research design of the PhD project on Socially Shared Health Information (SSHI)

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a multiphase, multi-project study, where each study informs the next study. Apart from the conceptual analysis, the PhD project contains of 4 empirical studies that informs the framework for understanding SSHI (see Figure 1).

Summary of Methods for Empirical Study 1 & 2 (ES 1&2)

In ES1, I conducted a mixed-method case study of the national Danish health portal, Sundhed.dk. I used interviews, netnographic analysis, document reviews and relevant statistical methods [5]. In ES2, I conducted an analysis of 153 public health organizations Facebook walls. I used netnographic analysis to identify the organizations and relevant statistical methods to analyze the results of the data [6]. Both articles are based on historic data sets collected from Facebook using the Social Data Analytics Tool (SODATO) [7].

3. PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF ES 1&2

In ES1, the study showed that Sundhed.dk's social media strategy was very well aligned with their organizational strategy, but that they were challenged to move beyond the generic social media metrics to define good indications for successful SSHI. Sundhed.dk needed domain-specific indicators in new public health to measure the effectiveness of their social media strategy, tactics, and operations [5].

In ES2, the study shows a rise in engagements on the Facebook walls from 2014, which suggest an increasing interest from users. Facebook posts containing a photo, or a link represent the most engaged with posts compared to other information sharing techniques. Health organizations might therefore want the photo to inform the textual content of their posts. They might need enhanced knowledge of how visual content about health information can form part of their health communication and campaigns [6].

4. DISCUSSION

The overall goal of my PhD project is to form a framework for understanding SSHI. In the first part of my PhD project, which is described in this paper, I have focused on understanding the phenomenon of SSHI and developing a theoretical model for how SSHI is done efficiently and effectively. The theoretical model is based on the conceptual analysis and the findings of ES1-3. In the second part of my PhD project, I will focus on testing the findings of the first part by applying action design research techniques in health organizations in Denmark and Norway. My goal is to use the results of the second part to define design guidelines for how health organizations observe the rules of the theoretical model in their practical design of SSHI. The findings of the two parts will help define my overall framework for SSHI, which is the kappa of my PhD dissertation.

5. FUTURE RESEARCH

I intend to analyze the visual data from ES2 and present the findings in ES3. I am preparing an action design research

study (ES4) in two public health organizations for testing my findings from ES1-3. The findings will inform the development of my design guidelines for SSHI.

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