

**JULIA SZAMBOLICS<sup>1</sup>**

IOANA MOLDOVAN. 2024. *Health-related Fake News. Case Study: Online Health Information Seeking and Sharing Behavior on Social Media among Romanian Retirees Aged 50+ during the Covid-19 Pandemic*. Cluj-Napoca: Accent. 194 p.

In today's digital age, where information spreads rapidly across social media platforms, disseminating health-related fake news has become a pervasive issue. Ioana Moldovan's book, "Health-related Fake News: Case Study: Online Health Information Seeking and Sharing Behavior on Social Media among Romanian Retirees Aged 50+ during the Covid-19 Pandemic," provides an insightful and thought-provoking look into the complexities of health-related fake news in the online sphere.

As the author states in the introduction of her book, the fake news phenomenon has always been present within society (p. 13). Still, it was particularly accentuated during events like the 2016 US election and the Brexit campaign. The study's main objectives include exploring the online health information seeking behaviors of retirees aged 50+, identifying informational characteristics of Facebook posts containing health-related fake news, and analyzing the engagement of the aforementioned age group with COVID-19-related false information. The book ties communication science to health communication in a rigorous interdisciplinary effort.

The book consists of 10 chapters, with the first six focusing on the context and the theoretical aspects surrounding the diffusion of false news

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<sup>1</sup> <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0066-9292>, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, [szambolics@fspac.ro](mailto:szambolics@fspac.ro)

on social media, conspiracy theories, various types of misinformation and disinformation, and fake news in the health sector.

The second part of the book consists of chapters 7-10, which outline the methodological approach adopted and the research conclusions. Each chapter ends with key takeaways, an aspect I find particularly important for the readers.

Chapter 1 explores the post-truth era and how social media networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, or Twitter (X) can facilitate the dissemination of false information. The author also presents the health sector's informational ecosystem, familiarizing the reader with the research's context and the key theoretical concepts of this book.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into the phenomenon of fake news, exploring its origins, evolution, and impact on society. Throughout 23 pages, the reader will gain insight into concepts such as misinformation, disinformation, and misinformation. The author defines conspiracy theories and vividly describes why people believe in them.

The third chapter provides a brief overview of popular social media platforms, which were primarily utilized to disseminate false information during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In chapter 4, the author turns the attention to health communication. This chapter delves into the specifics of health communication in crisis situations and offers an insight into fake news and conspiracy theories about COVID-19.

Given the target demographic of Romanian retirees aged 50+, the author explains, with a solid theoretical base, why people, particularly within the specified age group, share fake news on social media in the next chapter.

The theoretical part of the volume concludes with a review of communication theories that not only explain health information-seeking behaviors but also news-dissemination behaviors. To achieve this, the author maps out the foundational theories of the research, which include the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication Model, the Health Belief Model, Longo's Expanded Model of Health Information-Seeking Behavior, the Source Credibility Theory, the Elaboration-Likelihood Model, and the Channel Complementary theory.

Chapter 7 justifies the methodological approach. The author uses a mixed-methods approach, conducting both qualitative and quantitative methods. The author conducted an online survey with 104 respondents (aged 50-80). Furthermore, she interviewed 21 individuals (aged 52 to 89) on their traditional and social media usage, health communication, and health-related information-seeking behavior. Lastly, she analyzed 25 of the most shared Facebook posts containing COVID-19-related fake news.

In the following three chapters, the author provides a detailed description of each method, providing insights into the empirical findings. Lastly, the author presents the main conclusions, limitations, and perspectives of the study.

The current book comprises 440 sources and stands out as original and pertinent research in the academic field of communication studies on the subject of health-related fake news. The initial 94 pages provide a profound theoretical foundation, encompassing valuable fundamental and specialized literature from both Romanian and foreign scholars on the subject of the research. The research design, findings, and other pertinent empirical data are meticulously presented in the subsequent 60 pages.

I highly recommend this book for communication scholars, students, policymakers, and public health institutions, as it offers valuable insights on the online behavior of 50+ retirees, an age group often marginalized in scholarly investigations. In addition, Ioana Moldovan can bring attention to an issue that is highly pertinent and has the potential to have repercussions for society, namely fake news.

Ioana Moldovan successfully fills a gap in the literature with her meticulous research from March 2020 to April 2021, providing a compelling analysis of the dissemination of health-related fake news. Her book is a timely and essential contribution to understanding and combating the spread of misinformation in the digital age.