

Time well wasted? Online procrastination during times of unemployment / Severina Müller, Christian Fieseler, Miriam Meckel, & Anne Suphan

Abstract: This article examines the argument regarding whether perceived social exclusion during unemployment leads to procrastination through online media, which in turn lessens the job search efforts of the unemployed. Based on data from 386 unemployed Internet users, we argue that online procrastination plays an important role in the lives of the unemployed but has no immediate effects on their perceived job search efforts. Contextual factors play an important role; that is, the amount of motivational control that the unemployed can muster exerts a strong effect on job search efforts. Generally, unemployed Internet users with low motivational control struggle more with their job search efforts. Thus, the recreational use of online media as such is not necessarily detrimental to the efforts invested in finding a job; instead, online skill-building and motivational support are key antecedents to better empower the unemployed to use the Internet productively for finding reemployment.

Political fiction: Political emails during the 2014 U.S. midterm election / Bryan McLaughlin, Bailey Thompson, & Amber Krause

Abstract: This study draws attention to a largely overlooked, but crucial, facet of modern politics—the political email. A mixed-method analysis of one year’s worth of political emails was used to compare and contrast how the Democratic and Republican parties employed emails during the 2014 election. Results reveal both parties placed a clear emphasis on fundraising and voter mobilization, but also utilized distinct appeals, calls to action, and political narratives. Republican emails employed more interactive features and offered rewards that reinforced political hierarchies. The Republican narrative portrayed the ideal America as a relic of the past that must be reclaimed. Republicans asked readers to donate money in order to empower Republican leaders to win the war against President Obama—characterized as an unconstitutional and deceitful Imperialist. Democrats were more aggressive in their request for donations, employed more personalized appeals and rewards, and asked readers to get involved with grassroots organizing. The Democratic narrative portrayed the ideal America as an inclusive, utopian society that exists in the future. Democrats encouraged readers to view themselves as central characters in the narrative, where their actions can and will have direct consequences for America’s future.

The effect of measures taken by Craigslist to screen online ads for commercial sex: Evidence from North Carolina / Shana M. Judge

Abstract: A 2017 U.S. Senate subcommittee report charging employees at backpage.com with editing the website’s online ads for prostitution has revived debate over the willingness and ability of such websites to screen ads for unlawful commercial sex

activity. This study sheds light on the controversy by revisiting the dispute surrounding similar advertising on craigslist.com. Using an observational pre-post research design, I examined unique data collected from commercial sex ads on a North Carolina Craigslist site to assess the impact of enhanced ad-screening measures that Craigslist implemented to address misuse of its ad-hosting services. Results indicate that Craigslist's switch to a manual review of ads resulted in significant decreases in illicit ad content, temporarily inhibiting online marketing of commercial sex by regional advertisers.

The relationship between web content and web accessibility at universities: The influence of social and cultural factors / Pedro Lorca, Javier De Andrés, & Ana B. Martínez

Abstract: This research assesses whether universities from varied cultures rank significantly different with respect to the quality of their web contents and with regard to their web accessibility (WA) level. Moreover, this paper tests whether universities which make stronger efforts to improve the quality of their Web contents, also take into account WA issues to ease the access to such contents. We use a database containing 399 universities from 16 countries. Main results suggest that universities in Anglo-Saxon countries pay more attention to WA issues, and that those in Germanic countries rank significantly higher with regard to web quality contents. On a global basis there is a significant relationship between the level of accessibility at university web pages and the quality of the web contents. However, if countries are grouped, results are different. While in Germanic, Nordic and Anglo-Saxon countries there is no relation between the level of accessibility of university web pages and the quality of the web contents, in Latin countries this relation is direct and significant.

Source-target relationship and information specificity: Applying warranting theory to online information credibility assessment and impression formation / Jian Raymond Rui

Abstract: Other-generated information about specific targets available online reduces third parties' uncertainty of strangers. Yet only information perceived as credible can shape their impressions. This study examines how impressions form after exposure to online recommendations, a type of other-generated information via LinkedIn, through credibility assessment of these recommendations. The source-target relationship and recommendation specificity were manipulated in a 2 X 2 between-subjects experiment (N = 213). Main effects for both independent variables were found. Perceived manipulation likelihood and perceived credibility of recommendation mediated the impact of the source-target relationship on impressions. Additionally, perceived familiarity with the target and perceived credibility of recommendation mediated the impact of recommendation specificity on impressions. This study extends warranting theory and highlights the impact of new communication technology on credibility assessment of online information and impression formation.

Comparing grids with vertical and horizontal item-by-item formats for PCs and smartphones / Melanie Revilla & Mick P. Couper

Abstract: : Much research has been done comparing grids and item-by-item formats. However, the results are mixed, and more research is needed especially when a significant proportion of respondents answer using smartphones. In this study, we implemented an experiment with seven groups (n=1,476), varying the device used (PC or smartphone), the presentation of the questions (grids, item-by-item vertical, item-by-item horizontal) and, in the case of smartphones only, the visibility of the “next” button (always visible or only visible at the end of the page, after scrolling down). The survey was conducted by the Netquest online fieldwork company in Spain in 2016. We examined several outcomes for three sets of questions, which are related to cognitive burden (completion time, lost focus, answer changes, screen orientation) and data quality (item missing data, non-substantive responses, Instructional Manipulation Check failure, non-differentiation). The most striking difference found is for the placement of the “next” button in the smartphone item-by-item conditions: when the button is always visible, item missing data is substantially higher.

Reports and Communications

Investigating the adequacy of response time outlier definitions in computer-based web surveys using paradata “SurveyFocus” / Jan Karem Höhne & Stephan Schlosser

Abstract: Web surveys are commonly used in social research because they are usually cheaper, faster, and simpler to conduct than other modes. They also enable researchers to capture paradata such as response times. Particularly, the determination of proper values to define outliers in response time analyses has proven to be an intricate challenge. In fact, to a certain degree, researchers determine them arbitrarily. In this study, we use “SurveyFocus (SF)” – a paradata tool that records the activity of the web-survey pages – to assess outlier definitions based on response time distributions. Our analyses reveal that these common procedures provide relatively sufficient results. However, they are unable to detect all respondents who temporarily leave the survey, causing bias in the response times. Therefore, we recommend a two-step procedure consisting of the utilization of SF and a common outlier definition to attain a more appropriate analysis and interpretation of response times.

Persistent bias on Wikipedia: Methods and responses / Brian Martin

Abstract: Systematically biased editing, persistently maintained, can occur on Wikipedia while nominally following guidelines. Techniques for biasing an entry include deleting positive material, adding negative material, using a one-sided selection of sources, and exaggerating the significance of particular topics. To maintain bias in an entry in the face of resistance, key techniques are reverting edits, selectively invoking Wikipedia rules, and overruling resistant editors. Options for dealing with sustained biased editing include making complaints, mobilising counter-editing and exposing the bias. To illustrate these techniques and responses, the rewriting of my own Wikipedia entry serves as a case study. It is worthwhile becoming aware of persistent bias and developing ways to counter it in order for Wikipedia to move closer to its goal of providing accurate and balanced information.

