



Kayla Booth

Moving Beyond Text: How Teens Evaluate Video-Based High Stakes Health Information via Social Media

Kayla M. Booth^{1(✉)} and Eileen M. Trauth²

¹ University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, USA
kbooth@pitt.edu

² The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA
emtrauth@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper qualitatively examines how teenagers in the US evaluate high stakes health information via social media. Through 30 semi-structured interviews with teens ages 13–18, we explore how teens interact with and make decisions about the quality of video-based exercise and nutrition content. Participants indicated that they are wary of advertisements and language that encourages extreme weight loss, yet prefer video content that is “fun” and engaging. Additionally, participants reported having explicit and implicit criteria for evaluating videos with health content that includes both graphic and content quality.

Keywords: Social media · Information behavior · Information quality · Health information

1 Introduction

The Age of Information, and Web 2.0 in particular, have unearthed a tectonic shift in how information is disseminated. Traditional “gatekeepers,” such as publishing companies, editors, news organizations once developed and enforced criteria to assess what content was distributed to the masses. Now any user with an Internet connection (and the required skillset) can create and share content across audiences. While some scholars argue that this shift has enhanced the democracy of information sharing, others suggest that this places the onus of evaluation and decision-making onto users who may not have the appropriate level of training. This is particularly important given that many users make decisions based on the information they interact with online.

The exploration of how users evaluate information online, particularly via social media, has been a consistent thread of inquiry across information, computing, and related venues, including the iConference [1, 3, 4]. This inquiry is relevant across geographical regions, but is an increasingly “hot topic” in the United States regarding high-stakes contexts, such as politics and health. High-stakes information refers to content that individuals use to make decisions that can result in life-altering consequences. As the role of social media in both the 2016 Presidential Election and current