



## Media Use & News Avoidance

Media Use, Course A  
Summer Term 25  
Dr. Isabella Gonçalves

# AGENDA

- Meme Challenge
- Definition of News Avoidance
- Theoretical Background
- Empirical Findings

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# MEME CHALLENGE

Last week, I asked each of you to choose a theory we learned and create your own meme based on it.

**Today, it's time to reveal all the memes and vote for your favorite!**

## **Rules for Voting:**

- You **must vote**, but
- You **cannot vote for your own meme**

Let the best meme win!



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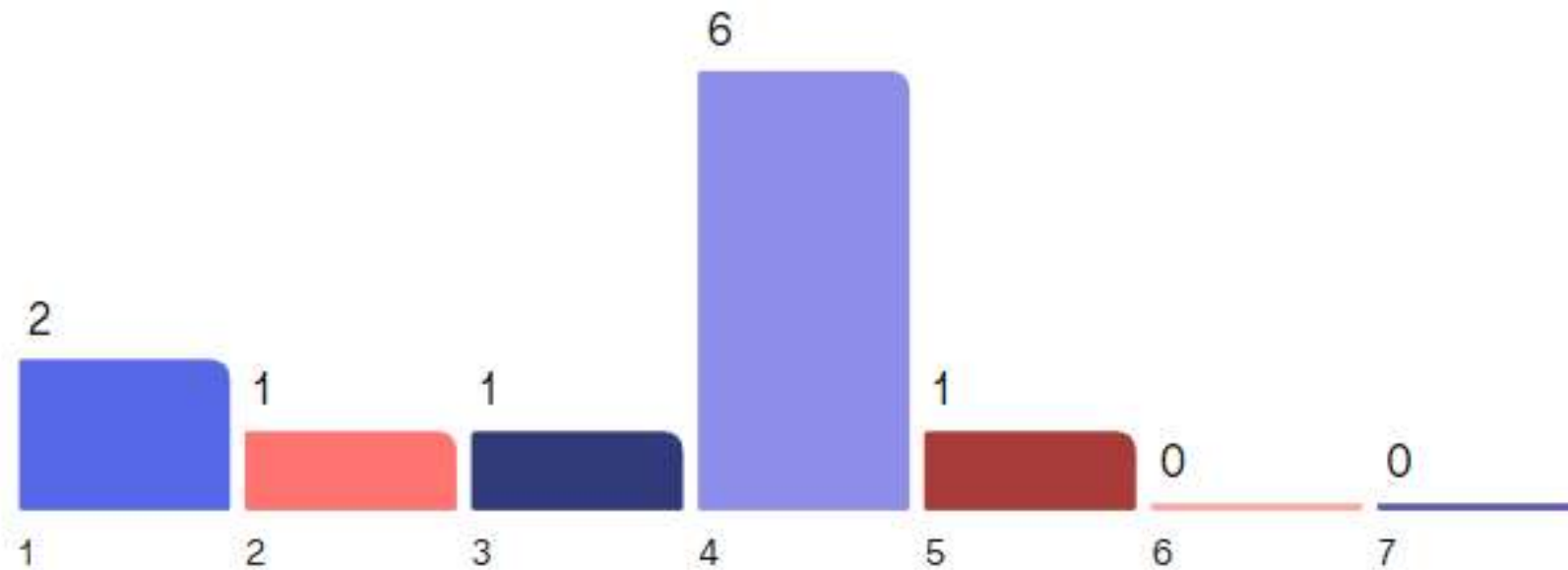
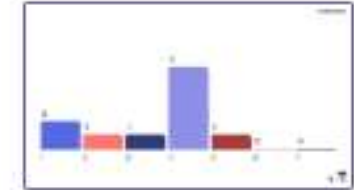
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Why do you (or your acq...

Select which slide to add



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# SHORT DISCUSSION

1. Do you avoid the news or do you know someone who does?
2. If yes, can you share why?



## MOST COMMON REASONS FOR NEWS AVOIDANCE – ALL MARKETS



**43%**

say there is too much politics and COVID-19



**36%**

say news has negative effect on mood



**29%**

say they are worn out by amount of news



**29%**

say the news is untrustworthy or biased



**17%**

say it leads to arguments I'd rather avoid



**16%**

say there is nothing I can do with the information

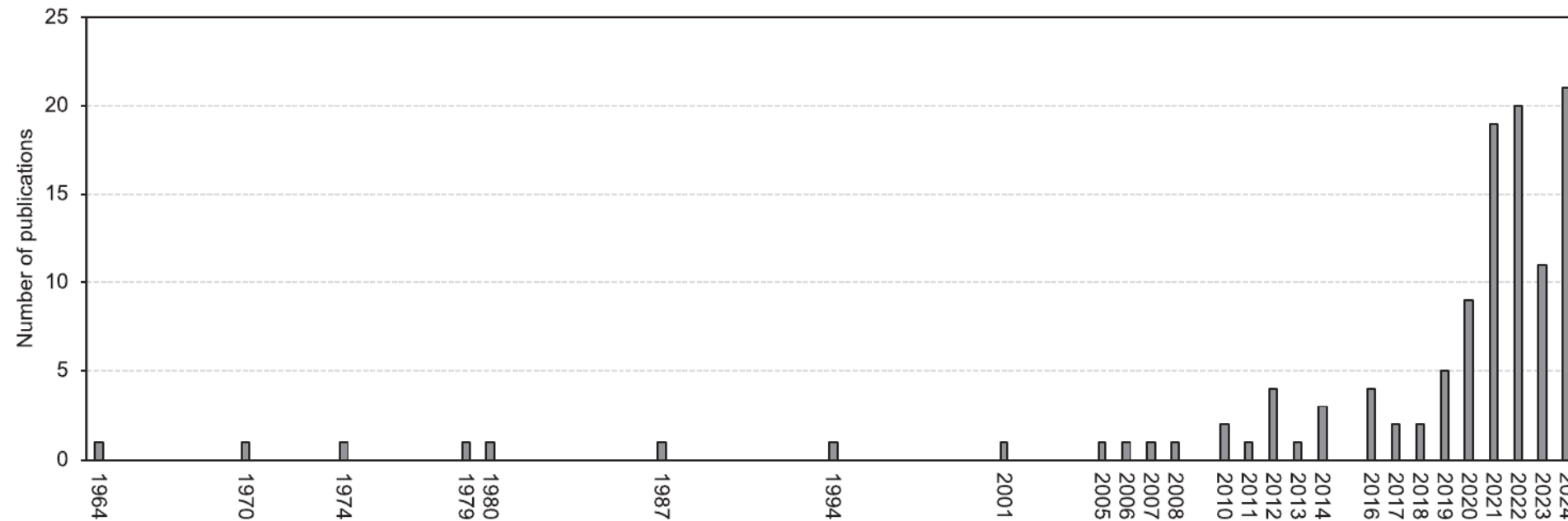
**Q1di\_2017ii.** Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Base: All who avoid the news often, sometimes, or occasionally. All markets = 64,120.

# DEFINITIONS AND TYPOLOGIES

The concept of News Avoidance in communication science is most commonly used to describe an **individual's behavior of avoiding the reception of news information in media environments** (Skoovsgard & Andersen, 2020).

In recent years, the field of News Avoidance has seen a surge in popularity, especially in the context of the covid-19 pandemic.

# RESEARCH EVOLUTION



**Figure 1.** Publications on news avoidance over time.

Notes:  $N = 116$ . If published online first, the publication is coded by first year of publication.

fig. 1; from Andersen et al., 2024b; p.1369

# DEFINITIONS

- There are multiple definitions of News Avoidance.
- Andersen (2020) defines news avoidance as no or limited news use (undefined threshold).
- Toff & Kalogeropoulos (2020) define as Intermittent behavior, varying in rate and form



# CONCEPT ASPECTS

- The concept is understood as multidimensional.
- Avoidance is differentiated by factors such as intentionality (Skoovsgard & Andersen, 2020; Villi et al. 2020) and consistency (Andersen et al.; 2024a; Andersen et al., 2024b).



INTENTION



CONSISTENCY

# INTENTIONALITY

- **Intentional News Avoidance:**  
Individuals consciously decide to avoid the news.
- **Unintentional News Avoidance:**  
Individuals end up avoiding the news not because they want to, but because it doesn't show up in their daily routines.



# CHALLENGE

- Many studies rely on **intentions** (what people *say* they want to do) rather than behaviors (what people *actually* do), often due to survey limitations.
- But ***intentional avoidance*** should only refer to actual behaviors based on a deliberate choice — not just intentions (Skoovsgard & Andersen, 2020).



# CONSISTENCY

When understanding avoidance by consistency on the other hand, researchers tend to distinguish individual's avoidance types by how consistently they avoid news, either **temporarily or selectively** (Andersen et al., 2024a, p.1371 f.).



CONSISTENCY

# TEMPORALITY

Deciding factor: how long avoidance behaviors persist.

Some avoiders “tune out from news temporarily”, whereas others “opt out of news media usage” for long periods.



# SELECTIVITY

Content specific news avoidance: for example, avoiding specific issues.

Medium-based avoidance behavior: avoidance to specific news mediums such as tabloid news.

## CONTENT-BASED



## MEDIUM-BASED



# IMPLICATIONS

- News avoidance affects democracy: It has key implications for civic engagement and political knowledge.
- Democracy needs informed citizens: Engaged and informed citizens are essential for democratic functioning.
- Research shows citizens get political info from news (e.g., Beckers et al. 2021; Soroka & Wlezien 2022).



# WHY DO INDIVIDUALS AVOID NEWS?

- People can avoid news content because it tends to elicit negative emotions (Zillmann, 2000)
- People may select out of news in order to avoid content that does not align with one's attitudes and beliefs (Stroud, 2011)



# THEORETICAL EXPLANATION?

| Reason                                                                                                                      | Theory                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| People can avoid news content because it tends to elicit negative emotions (Zillmann, 2000)                                 | Mood management suggests that it is possible that people choose not only some other media but also a different activity altogether in order to sustain or create a good mood.                                                                                                       |
| People may select out of news in order to avoid content that does not align with one's attitudes and beliefs (Stroud, 2011) | Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that (a) dissonance is felt in the form of physical and psychological discomfort when exposed to information that does not align with one's attitudes and beliefs, and (b) that people experiencing dissonance will be motivated to reduce it. |

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# ISSUES FATIGUE

- Findings showed issue fatigue as a strong predictor of avoidance (Gurr & Metag, 2022).
- Issue fatigue showed a high association with information avoidance in Germany, while it was comparably weaker in Pakistan in particular (Schumann et al., 2022).



# INFORMATION & NEWS OVERLOAD

The definition of news overload is that too much news content seriously interferes with an audience's ability to quickly and accurately select useful news information (Holton & Chyi, 2012).



# INFORMATION & NEWS OVERLOAD

- Positive correlation between news overload and news avoidance (Xu et al., 2024)
- Findings of another study showed that people felt overwhelmed by the amount of news coverage of Covid-19 (De Bruin et al., 2021)



# TRUST

The more individuals trusted the coverage, the less they avoided such information (Goyaness et al., 2023; Li et al., 2024; Schumann et al., 2022)



# SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS



- Individuals at less privileged social positions are more likely to report a total news avoidance online (Lindell & Bage, 2023)



- Political interest is one of the most consistent independent variables (Strömback et al., 2013)



- Women are more likely to totally avoid online news (Lindell & Bage, 2023). This may reflect traditional gender roles. Caretaking responsibilities can limit time for news consumption (Toff & Palmer, 2019).

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