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Target audience knowledge among professionals responsible for multilingual crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic

One of the challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic was the provision of multilingual, up-to-date, and accessible health information in a constantly evolving crisis. This article analyses the forms of target audience knowledge that communication professionals responsible for multilingual health information accumulated and the sources from which they gathered it. The analysis is based on 18 expert interviews conducted in 2021 and 2022. The interviewees worked in communication roles in the municipalities of the Helsinki metropolitan area, a state expert institution, the business sector, NGOs, a media outlet broadcasting and publishing in a foreign language, and an institution of higher learning. First, we present previous research on multilingual Covid-19 communication and the significance of communication professionals' target audience knowledge. Subsequently, we analyse examples from the data to examine the various forms of target audience knowledge and their impact on multilingual Covid-19 communication. Finally, we consider the developmental needs that emerge from the analysis.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, multilingualism, crisis communication, target audience knowledge, language expertise