

Media choice for communication about epidemic diseases in the Netherlands and the UK: A mismatch between sender and receiver!

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Outline of the paper

- Cultural differences in the use of communication media in the light of the *Information Richness Theory*, the *Context Theory* and the value *Uncertainty Avoidance*.
- Expectations regarding differences between the Netherlands and the UK in the use of communication media to inform about the Swine flu (senders' perspective).
- Corpus Analysis: Communication media used in the Netherlands and in the UK to inform about the Swine flu.
- Expectations regarding differences between the Netherlands and the UK in the preference for communication media when informed about an epidemic disease (receivers' perspective).
- Experiment: Communication media that the Dutch and the British target group preferred most when informed about an epidemic disease.
- Conclusion, discussion and implications for health communication.

Information richness theory and communication media (Daft and Lengel 1984)

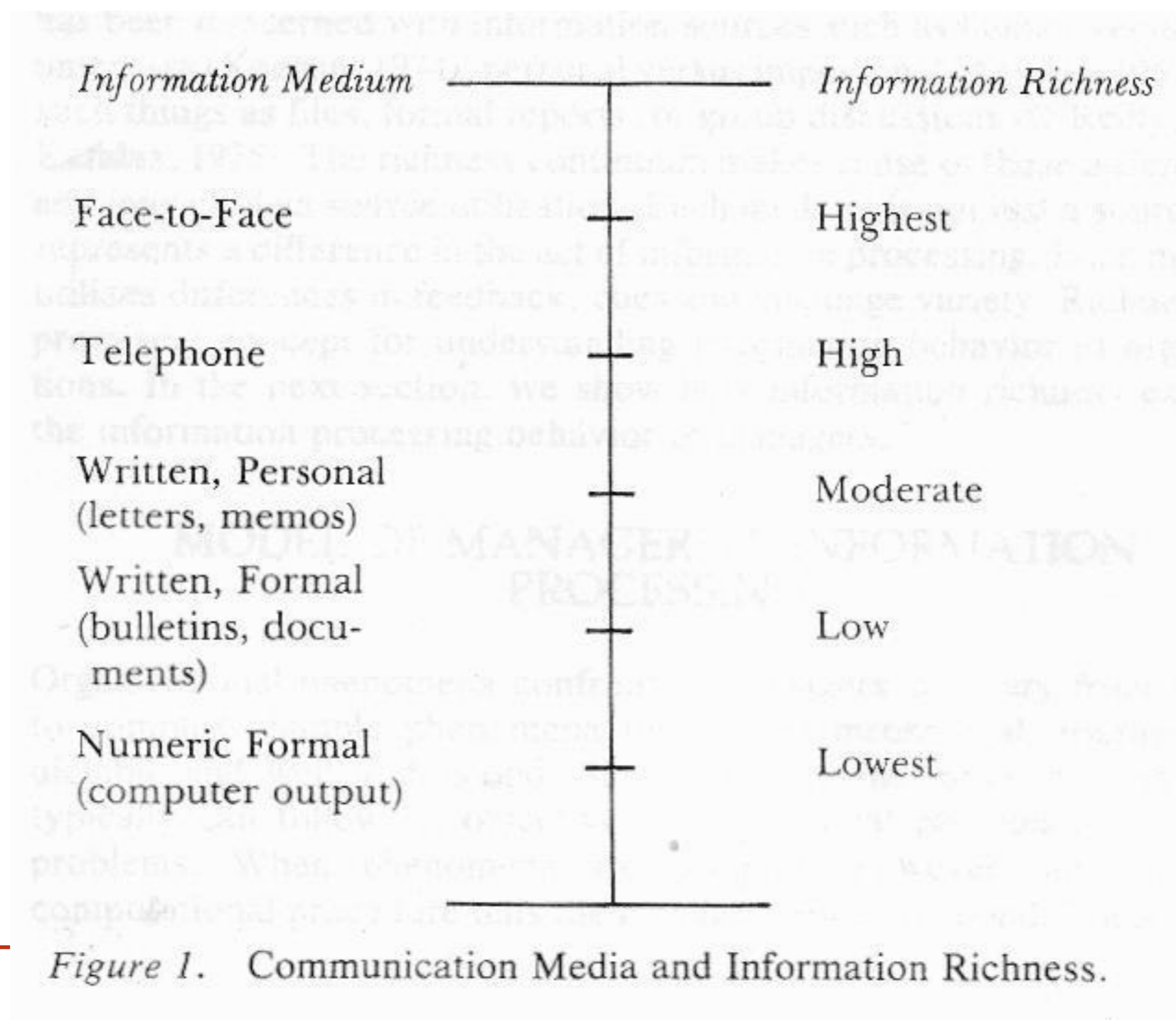


Figure 1. Communication Media and Information Richness.

Information richness determined by:

1. Type of cues a medium passes on – verbal, non-verbal, vocal cues etc. ;
2. How easy it is to give feedback;
3. Extent to which the message can be tuned to the receiver;
4. Natural language or not.

Problems with the Information Richness Theory

Based only on the perspective of the **sender** of the message

Based only on research in the **United States**, a rather low context culture

The Context theory of Edward T. Hall

Cultures differ in the extent to which they use context and situation for the interpretation of a message.

In **high-context cultures**, most of the meaning of a message is deduced from the context in which the words occur (e.g. non-verbal communication and setting)

In **low-context cultures**, the meaning of a message is primarily deduced from the words.

Rough classification of high and low context cultures (From Victor 1992:160)

High context

Asian cultures
Arabic cultures
Latin-American cultures
Italian cultures
British cultures
French cultures
North-American cultures
The Netherlands
Scandinavian cultures
Germany

Low context

Swiss-German

Information richness theory and context theory

Communication media high in richness will be used more frequently in high context cultures than in low context cultures

Communication media low in richness will be used more frequently in low context cultures than in high context cultures

The value uncertainty avoidance of Geert Hofstede (2001)

Cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance have a much greater need for clarity and preclusion of ambiguity and uncertainty than cultures with a low uncertainty avoidance

Information richness theory and uncertainty avoidance

Communication media high in richness will be used more frequently in cultures with a low uncertainty avoidance than in cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance

Communication media low in richness will be used more frequently in cultures with a high uncertainty avoidance than in cultures with a low uncertainty avoidance.

The Netherlands and the UK

The Netherlands has a lower context than the UK

The Netherlands has a higher uncertainty avoidance than the UK

Expectation 1 tested in corpus analysis (senders' perspective)

- 1a. The Dutch more often use communication media with low information richness than the British do.
- 1b. The British more often use communication media with high information richness than the Dutch do.

Corpus analysis: Method

Analysis of all the communication media used by the Dutch and the British government to inform the public about the Swine flu.

Dutch campaign: *Grip op Griep* (catch the flu). Start August 19th 2009

British campaign: *Catch it. Bin it. Kill it.* Start May 5th 2009

Restriction to external communication, communication with residents of the Netherlands and the UK

Netherlands: Communication media used in the campaign *Grip op Griep*

Passive: Residents received information from the government through the following communication media

- Brochures sent to all addresses in the Netherlands
- Flyers
- Posters
- Banners
- Radio and tv commercials
- Letters to organisations on how to avoid infection
- Advertisements about vaccination
- Newsletter

Active: Residents could consult the following communication media for information

- Call a toll free number
- Surf to the web site griepPandemie.nl
- Watch a video on the internet showing a doctor giving explanation about the Swine flu virus
- Follow [Twitter.com/griepPandemie](https://twitter.com/griepPandemie)
- Ask questions to a doctor in a video chat session

Netherlands: Brochure



Hoesten, niezen en neus snuiten in papieren zakdoekje.



Zakdoekje direct weggooien.



Handen wassen met water en zeep.



Wat is Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1)?

Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1) is een virus dat griep veroorzaakt. Het griepvirus verspreidt zich via de lucht en wordt overgedragen door druppeltjes snot, slijm en speeksel.

Omdat veel mensen reizen verspreidt het nieuwe griepvirus zich snel over de wereld. Inmiddels hebben allerlei landen te maken met dit griepvirus. In Nederland is de officiële naam voor dit virus Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1), beter bekend als Mexicaanse Griep. Mensen die besmet zijn met Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1) kunnen de griep aan andere mensen overdragen. De door dit virus veroorzaakte griep staat op dit moment bekend als 'mild'. Dat betekent dat het nieuwe griepvirus en de symptomen niet veel afwijken van de normale seizoensgriep. De meeste mensen herstellen binnen een week. Wat wel anders is, is dat veel mensen tegelijkertijd ziek kunnen worden. Als het griepvirus zich verder gaat verspreiden dan schat men dat 1 op de 3 mensen ziek kan worden. Dat kan effect hebben op allerlei zaken binnen ons dagelijks leven.

Net als bij de normale seizoensgriep zullen mensen overlijden aan het nieuwe virus. Veel meer mensen zullen besmet raken met en ziek worden door het nieuwe griepvirus. Het aantal mensen dat overlijdt aan de gevolgen van de griep zal daarom ook hoger zijn.

Hoe kan ik voorkomen dat ik besmet word?

U kunt nooit helemaal voorkomen dat u besmet raakt. Wel kunt u de kans op besmetting verkleinen. Het griepvirus verspreidt zich vooral via de lucht door hoesten, niezen of praten. U kunt besmet worden door het virus in te ademen en via uw handen:

- ☒ **Was vaak uw handen met water en zeep.**
Het virus kan op uw handen komen als u een voorwerp aanraakt of als u iemand een hand geeft. Was daarom regelmatig uw handen en droog ze daarna goed af.
- ☒ **Raak zo min mogelijk uw ogen, neus en mond aan.**
Het virus kan op uw handen komen als u een voorwerp aanraakt of als u iemand een hand geeft. Via uw handen kan het virus in uw ogen, neus of mond komen.

Netherlands: TV commercial “Going Home”



NL Mexicaanse griep video 2.wmv



Netherlands: advertisement “I’m never ill. Should I get the Swine flu vaccine?”



**Ik ben nooit ziek.
Zal ik me toch
laten vaccineren?**

Kijk voor het antwoord op al je vragen over
Mexicaanse griep en vaccinatie op
grippencentraal.nl of tel 0800-1100 (gratis)

 ZO HOUDEN WE
GRIP OP GRIEP

Netherlands: Twitter

griepandemie (griepandemie) on Twitter - Windows Internet Explorer

Have an account? [Sign in](#)

Get short, timely messages from griepandemie.
Twitter is a rich source of instantly updated information. It's easy to stay updated on an incredibly wide variety of topics. [Join today](#) and follow [@griepandemie](#).

[Give it a try](#) Get updates via SMS by texting [follow griepandemie](#) to your local code. [Codes for other countries](#)

griepandemie
Web <http://www.griepandemie.nl/>
0 following 189 followers 18 listed

Tweets 49

[Favorites](#)
[Following](#)

[RSS feed of griepandemie's tweets](#)

Vaccinatiecampagne Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1) afgerond - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/bbbSQq>
9:42 AM Mar 9th via twitterfeed

Inhaalronde GGD-prik Nieuwe Influenza A - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/714vUU>
9:15 AM Jan 6th via twitterfeed

Stand van zaken: epidemie lijkt voorbij - Nieuws:

griepandemie (griepandemie) on Twitter - Windows Internet Explorer

<http://bit.ly/7NWWOh>
1:46 AM Dec 29th, 2009 via twitterfeed

Nieuwe Influenza A (H1N1) officieel geen epidemie meer - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/6VYGGf>
7:15 AM Dec 24th, 2009 via twitterfeed

GGD'en maken inhaalrondes vaccinatie bekend - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/4z77Cd>
2:54 AM Dec 23rd, 2009 via twitterfeed

77% haalde ook 2e GGD-prik tegen Mexicaanse griep - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/8E1DUj>
9:01 AM Dec 22nd, 2009 via twitterfeed

Stand van zaken: epidemie neemt af - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/8mgyJc>
2:43 AM Dec 18th, 2009 via twitterfeed

Sneeuwoverlast en de tweede prik bij de GGD - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/7Fcio>
4:10 AM Dec 17th, 2009 via twitterfeed

Gorinchem verplaatst priklocatie - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/6XnlH4>
6:27 PM Dec 15th, 2009 via twitterfeed

Stand van zaken: griepklachten nemen verder af - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/8cW3tl>
3:23 AM Dec 11th, 2009 via twitterfeed

Volgende week: tweede prikronde GGD - Nieuws: <http://bit.ly/6XDPHe>
6:34 AM Dec 9th, 2009 via twitterfeed

UK: Communication media used in the campaign

Catch it. Bin it. Kill it

Passive: Residents received information from the government through the following communication media

Brochures sent to all addresses in the UK

Flyers

Posters

Radio and tv commercials

Advertisements

Special for children: comic book

Special for children: a song

Active: Residents could consult the following communication media for information

Call a toll free number

Surf to the web site nhs.uk and direct.gov.uk/swineflu

Subscribe to a text message service

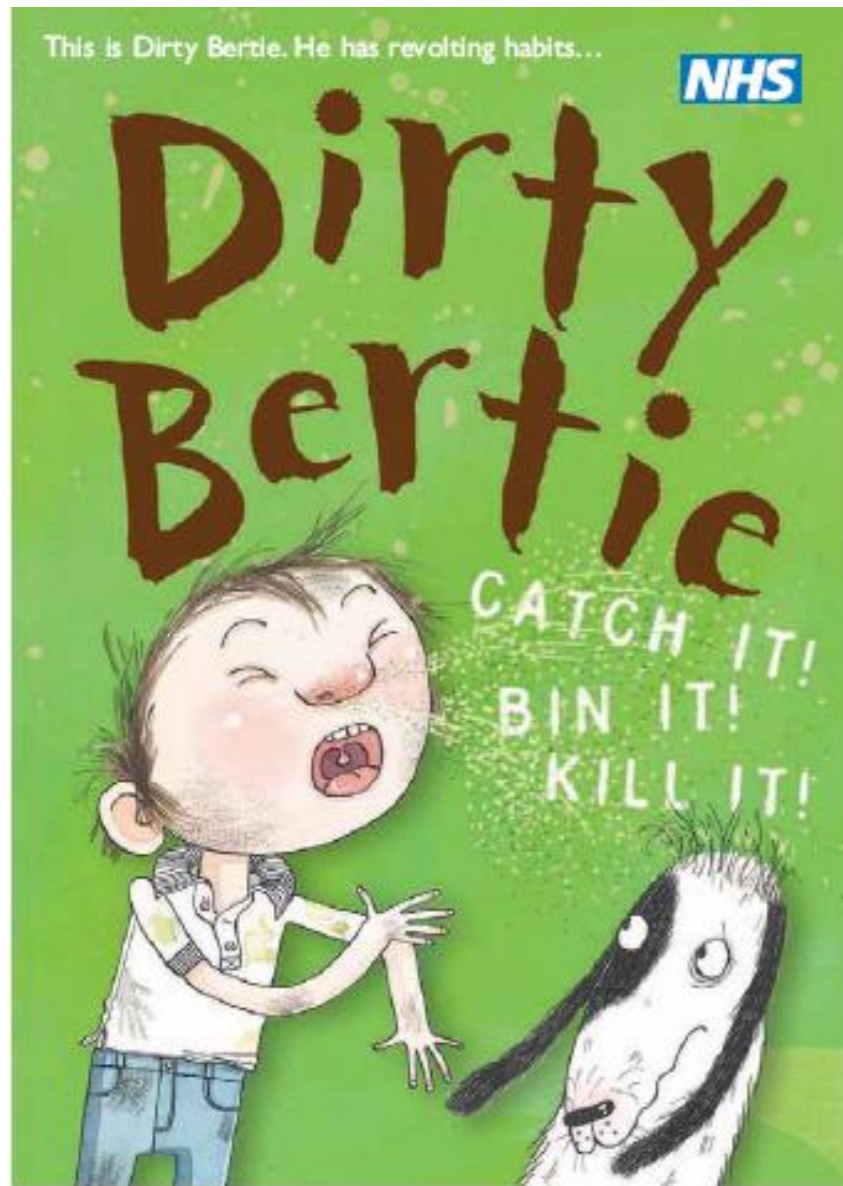
UK: tv commercial (sign language)



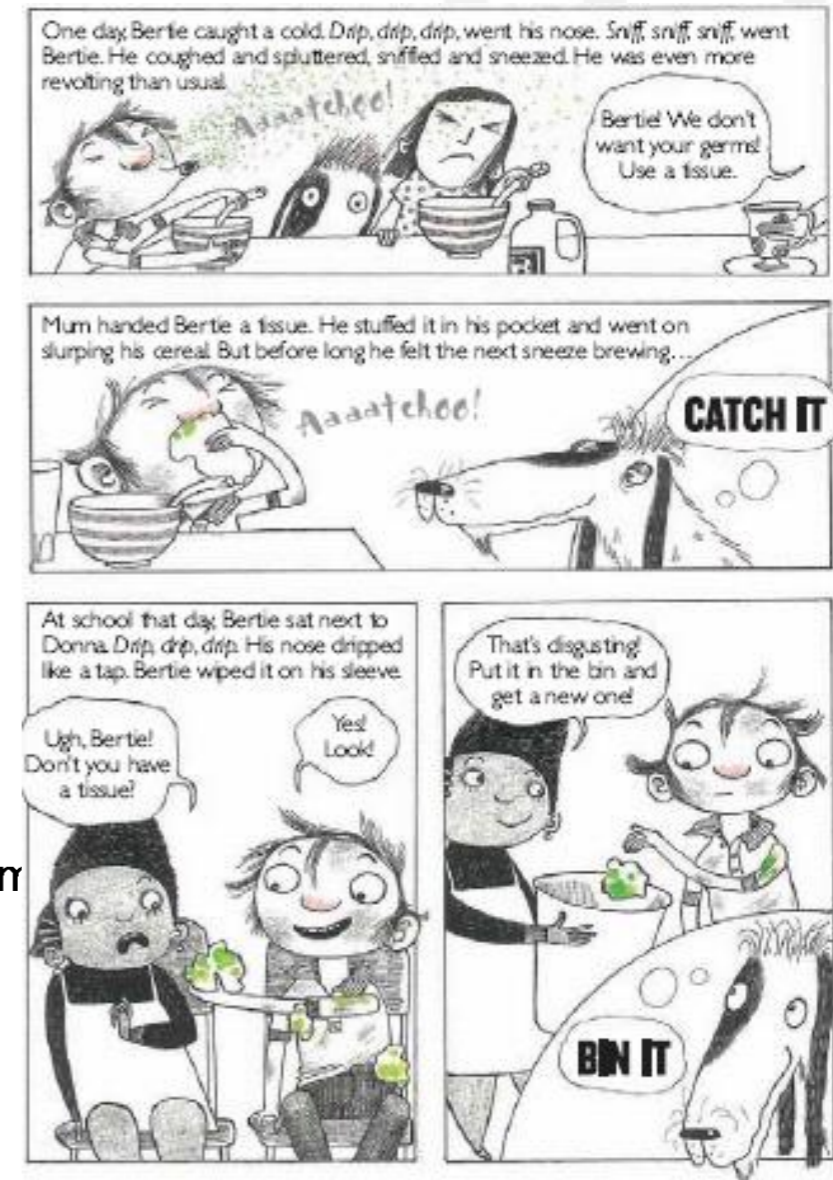
Televisie commercial gebarentaal.wmv



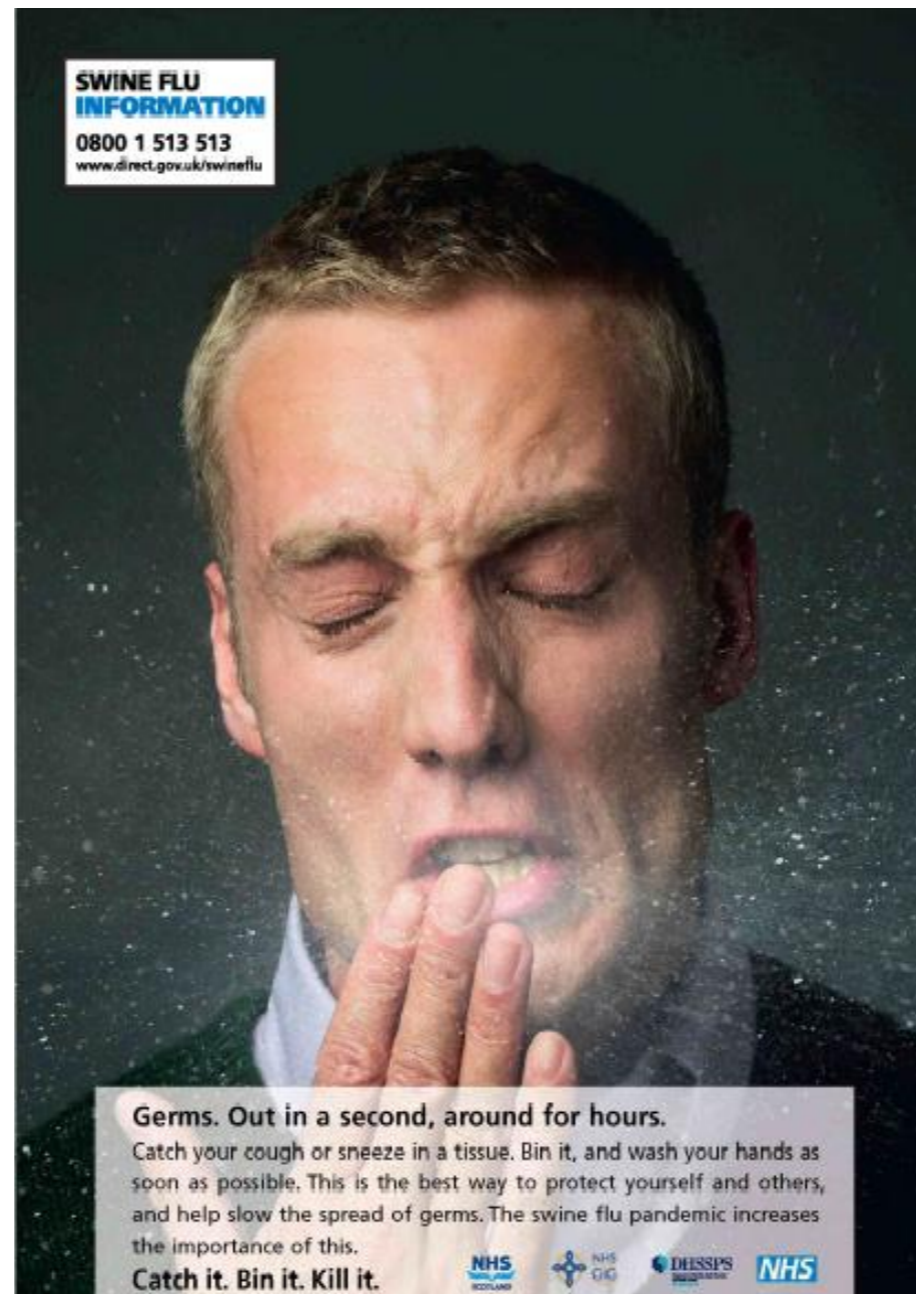
UK: Nursery rhyme and comic for children



Nursery Rhyme Catch it. Bin it. Kill it..r



UK: poster “sneezing man”



Communication media used in the Netherlands and the UK, ordered from low in information richness to high in information richness

| Communication medium | Information Richness | The Netherlands | United Kingdom |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Brochure | 1 | 7x | 4x |
| Flyer | 1 | 1x | 1x |
| Poster | 1 | 9x | 8x |
| Banner | 1 | 2x | NO |
| Advertisement | 1 | 6x | 2x |
| Newsletter | 1 | 1x | NO |
| Text message | 1 | NO | YES |
| Twitter | 1 | YES | NO |
| Radio commercial | 2 | 7x | 4x |
| Television commercial | 2 | 3x | 2x |
| Comic (for children) | 2 | NO | 1x |
| Letter | 2 | 1x | NO |
| Video doctor | 2 | 5x | NO |
| Song (for children) | 2 | NO | 1x |
| Website | 3 | YES | YES |
| Telephone number | 4 | YES | YES |
| Video chat | 4 | 2x | NO |

Frequency of use of communication media with information richness 1, 2, 3 and 4 for information about the Swine flu for Dutch and UK residents

| Information Richness media | The Netherlands (N=44) | UK (N=23) |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| 1 (low) | 26x | 15x |
| 2 | 16x | 7x |
| 3 | 0x | 1x |
| 4 (high) | 2x | 0x |

Expectation 1 tested in corpus analysis (senders' perspective)

- 1a. The Dutch more often use communication media with low information richness than the British do. **Not confirmed**
- 1b. The British more often use communication media with high information richness than the Dutch do. **Not confirmed**

In both countries media **low in information richness** are used most **by senders**.

Expectation 2 tested in experiment (receivers' perspective)

- 2a. The Dutch target group prefers communication media with low information richness more than the British target group does
- 2b. The British target group prefers communication media with high information richness more than the Dutch target group does

Experiment: Method, respondents

The Netherlands: 103 students studying at the Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands

United Kingdom: 99 students studying at the University of Sheffield in the UK

Experiment: Method, test item for the UK

Imagine a new infectious disease has broken out in another country and is spreading rapidly. The disease is transmitted through person-to-person contact. The disease can cause unpleasant symptoms, such as fever, headache and severe muscle aches, but it is not dangerous. The disease is spreading more rapidly than expected and is now spreading throughout the United Kingdom as well. However, according to the authorities you are not at risk of getting the disease.

Experiment: Results, preference for communication media

| Communication medium | Information Richness | The Netherlands (N=103) | UK (N=99) | Significant difference UK versus The Netherlands according to Chi Squares |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|---|
| Brochure | 1 | 20 | 28 | |
| Poster | 1 | 2 | 18 | $\chi^2 = 14.92, df=1, p=.001$ |
| Informational letter | 1 | 35 | 20 | $\chi^2 = 4.84, df=1, p=.03$ |
| Press release in newspaper | 1 | 24 | 26 | NS |
| Radio commercial | 1 | 9 | 12 | NS |
| Television commercial | 2 | 40 | 40 | NS |
| Announcement in public transport | 2 | 1 | 3 | NS |
| Website | 3 | 42 | 39 | NS |
| Through a practitioner | 4 | 44 | 32 | NS |

Experiment: Results, preference for communication media 2

| Information Richness | The Netherlands (N=103) | UK (N=99) | Significant difference the Netherlands versus UK according to χ^2 |
|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| 1 (low) | 90 | 104 | $\chi^2 = 3.68, df=1, p=.05$ |
| 2 | 41 | 43 | NS |
| 3 | 42 | 39 | NS |
| 4 (high) | 136 | 111 | $\chi^2 = 2.79, df=1, p=.09$ |

Expectation 2 tested in Experiment (receivers' perspective)

2a. The Dutch target group prefers communication media with low information richness more than the British target group does. **NOT CONFIRMED**, small indication for contrary

2b. The British target group prefers communication media with high information richness more than the Dutch target group does. **NOT CONFIRMED**, very small indication for contrary

In both countries communication media **high in information richness** are appreciated most **by receivers**.

Conclusion

The Dutch and British government do not differ when it comes to the information richness of the communication media they used. They **mostly used media with low information richness.**

The Dutch and UK respondents hardly differ in preference for communication media. Respondents from both countries **prefer media with a high information richness.**

There is a **mismatch** between the communication media the governments used to inform about the Swine flu virus and the media the target group prefers.

Discussion

Theories based on cultural values do not predict choice and appreciation of communication media. What could be the reason?

Wrong theories

Interfering factors?

Is the world a global village regarding media choice and media preference?

Implications for health communication

:

Try to adapt media choice to the preferences of the target group!

GRAZIE PER L'ATTENZIONE



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