

## **DEBATE TOPICS AND PATTERNS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF NUTRITION IN GERMANY**

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### **Abstract**

The topic of nutrition is of great interest in German media, but the patterns of media coverage vary as regards content, approach, or form. This paper presents the findings of a research which aimed to identify, at a general level, the major debate topics and the related issues on the subject of nutrition and food, as well as the main characteristics of the corresponding media coverage. At a specific level, different research questions focused both on the content and the form of the media messages. In this regard, a thematic content analysis of the German online media over a three-year period was conducted. According to the research results, the most common debate topics concerning nutrition were those related to health, diets, and the risks associated with nutrition and food, especially those pointing health, medical conditions and environment. Such topics were addressed by the German media over the considered time frame mostly in detailed articles, containing analyzes, reviews and viewpoints, and attended by a considerable number of photos and videos,

largely emphasizing the importance of healthy nutrition and health food, and giving many recommendations and useful information in this matter. At the same time, however, creating a certain paradox, media constantly attempted to animate food and drink, mediatizing countless foods and drinks, some of them unhealthy, and generally numerous culinary delights and temptations.

**Keywords:** nutrition, food, health, diets, media coverage, Germany.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nutrition and food represent topics often covered by the German mass media (Benterbusch, 1997; Rössler, 2006; Barlösius and Rehaag, 2006). Such subjects appear frequently in the German media both as the central theme, dealing with topics such as healthy and/or sustainable nutrition, nutritional behavior, diets, health food and so forth, as well as an issue related to other main topics, especially those regarding health and illness, environment, animal husbandry and different social issues.

This paper deals with the media coverage of the general theme of nutrition and food in the German online media in a period of three years (2014-2016). The main research objectives were to identify the most typical topics concerning nutrition and food and the related issues, as well as to analyze the characteristics and practices of/in the mass media coverage of this subject.

On that account, a thematic content analysis was conducted, in order to find answers to specific research questions like: which are the major topics covered by German media in relation to nutrition and food?; to what extent do the media make suggestions and recommendations on nutrition, and when they make, to what do they refer?; to what extent are the topics of “health” and “illness/ disease/ medical condition” covered together with the theme “nutrition/ food”?; to what extent are articles accompanied by photographs and video

clips?; is there any food present in the articles' texts, respectively in the images and videos?; which are the main sources of information regarding nutrition used by the journalists? Etc.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Mass media play a key role in shaping opinions and values in democratic societies, and nutrition, food and health reporting is no exception (McCombs, 2004; Nerlich and Koteyko, 2008; Coleman, Thorson and Wilkins, 2011). Media messages on nutritional topics seem to be ubiquitous (Rössler, 2006: 62): from diet tips, recipes or diets in women's or fitness magazines, to cookery programs on television (and even on the radio), to so-called "documentary" or "reality" soap operas in which overweight volunteers – mostly unsuccessful – want to lose their pounds. Besides media contents addressing commodity knowledge, nutrient and nutritional constituents, nutritional behavior, diets recommendations, gastronomic and gourmet tips and competitions, nutritional information in counseling formats, eating disorders, etc., other topics are regular in media, like those referring to weight, overweight and obesity (Raisborough, 2016), health and illness and their bonds to nutrition, such as diseases associated to alimentation and nutrition, diet-related diseases and generally the influence of nutrition on the health condition of people and population.

Moreover, current journalism regularly reports on food scandals, animal husbandry, the production conditions in the food industry, or the impact of nutrition practices and habits on the environment and even on the future of the planet. However, many journalists that approach nutrition seem to favor food, cooking, and health content, dealing rather not critically with nutritional information materials. That is why information from non-commercial primary

communicators may have a good chance of being distributed via newspapers with little or no transformation (Benterbusch, 1997: 44).

Media coverage of nutrition and food rests upon the specifics of the media: national vs. local, print media vs. television, special magazines vs. public media and so on, their content being differentiated as concerns topics, areas of interest, target groups etc. While subjects related to nutrition in the national media are typically of national relevance, local media approach more often subjects relevant in the regional context. Print media and TV differ in terms of design opportunities, usage and expectations. The visualization of content basically has a reinforcing effect on perception, for this being used keywords such as “eye catcher”, emotionalization, etc. In addition, a story can be “narrated” with moving pictures, so to speak a “duplication” of the verbal content of a theme can be achieved (Hänsli, 2006: 72). Moreover, contributions on television have a high coverage, but are only relatively short and often not deliberately selected (for example, topics in news). In contrast, texts in the print media are available at any time, the selection of topics and events is more targeted, and they are more frequently used as background information (ibid.). Special magazines and TV/radio broadcasts differ from media addressed to the large, heterogeneous public in terms of content and target group orientation. Specialized or specialist articles, journals and broadcasting formats cover topics in depth, often with the accordingly specialized or specific orientation. For example, nutrition in health magazines or broadcasts is highlighted usually in association with health and well-being, in agricultural periodicals most probably in connection with the cultivation of food, in the fitness journals with reference to body and exercise etc. Unspecialized, public media present topics rather simplistic, generally understandable and oriented to everyday life (ibid.).

Nowadays one can speak about a trend in journalism toward negativism and sensationalism (many articles appear under a negative,

sensationalistic sign), personalization (topics are tied to people) and conflict, respectively scandalization (whenever and wherever possible a conflict or a scandal is revealed). For example, coverage of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, commonly known as “mad cow disease”), highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), African swine fever virus (ASFV), or the use of highly hazardous pesticides (World Health Organization, 2010) in agriculture, such as glyphosate, are all examples of highly publicized scandals regarding food and nutrition. Other means of drawing attention to topics is the already above stated visualization and emotionalization: because images can express things better and, above all, in a shorter time, can arouse feelings (Hänsli, 2006: 72). Thus, for instance, in the topics listed before, the media did not hesitate to show dozens of cattle, poultry or swine being driven into the slaughterhouse, and the farmers pursuing that with tears in their eyes.

This journalistic trend toward negativism, sensationalism, scandalization, which correspond to a transformation of news into a popularized, lurid, and sensational form, was conceptualized as “tabloidization”. This term describes the dramatically change of the mainstream news media along with the news market becoming increasingly competitive, involving a replacement of the stories about politics and civic issues with media contents intended to be entertaining, i.e. type of news one might expect to see in tabloid publications. In other words, the tabloidization implies that the mainstream media borrow the techniques used by the tabloid press in order to attract public attention (Burlison Mackay, 2017). Stories written in a tabloidized manner might accentuate rather sensational, including even despicable and/or obscene details, and publicize rumors and gossips about celebrities and public persons, as well as a lot of photos of the same kind, rather than information designed to keep the public informed of government policies and societal issues (ibid.).

Often nutrition is addressed in mass media in terms of viability or in relation to the costs of nutrition or health consequences. Especially health topics are an important part of mass media communication (Chapman, 2001; Scherer and Link, 2017). While in the past nutrition was ranked among the risk factors for health, but in the form of malnutrition, along with other factors such as unsafe or infested water, poor hygiene conditions and public sanitation, indoor air pollution, etc. – all of which considered to be traditional risks – nowadays nutrition is still a risk factor for health, but in the form of unhealthy or inadequate nutrition, which contributes to the increasing of the incidence of some nutrition-related diseases such as type 2 diabetes, gastro-intestinal diseases, different allergies and cardiovascular affections, and of some risky for health conditions such as overweight and obesity (the so-called modern risks) (World Health Organization, 2009: 3).

Although frequently such health-related issues are treated in the media with concern, it cannot be eluded that, at the same time, the media constantly attempt to animate food and drink, through the wide range of culinary delights and enticements via not only the advertising, but also the countless non-fiction and fiction programs, in which food and drink are omnipresent. These media contents can be seen as part of the causes for the ever-increasing number of obese people (Stange and Leitzmann, 2010: 276).

Being regarded to the wider theoretical paradigm of socio-cultural constructivism, the research approach presented in this paper can be placed at the intersection of the studies on media framing, specific to the sociology of journalism (Borah, 2018) and the analyzes on the social construction of various topics of general public interest, specific to the constructivist sociology.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study presented in this paper can be placed, in terms of methodology, on the line of researches that use content analysis to make inferences in systematic identification and emphasizing the features of messages (Deacon et al., 2010; Altheide and Schneider, 2013; Krippendorff, 2018). The conducted thematic content analysis covered a three-year period, namely 2014-2016, and regarded the media messages released as news in the German online media. The types of media in which the analyzed articles were published were varied: newspapers, magazines, news websites, etc., just as were the types of media products analyzed: simple news, analysis articles, reportages, opinion articles, etc.

The procedure for sampling the articles included in the analysis was as follows: in the online search engine [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) the keyword “Ernährung” (“nutrition” in German language) was used. In the Google menu, “News” was selected and in “Tools” there was chosen “Recent”, in order to be able to delimit the above-mentioned time frame. This was determined by selecting “Custom Range” and limiting the search to the time interval from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. The media articles of the first ten pages resulted from the Google search were included in the analysis. Typically, ten search results appear on the Google search page (ten articles with the topic one is looking for). However, in search of German online media, in some cases more than one press article was displayed for a particular subject; therefore in my research I took into account and analyzed not just one hundred articles, which normally should appear on the top ten Google search pages, but 138, because that many have actually appeared on the top ten pages of Google search. All considered entries were online press articles, in German language.

The variety of the types of media and articles was determined by the fact that the selection of the linguistic material, and thus of the corpus of

messages that were analyzed, was made exclusively based on their online display on the first ten pages as a result of the order used through the Google search engine, without using other criteria. In this way, by applying the rule of selecting all the entries resulted from the search, one of the fundamental principles of applying the content analysis has been adhered, namely choosing the text corpus included in the study according to explicit rules, applied consistently and systematically (Gunter, 2000: 56). Furthermore, because the results displayed through Google reflect the attributes of exposed messages such as the popularity of the source, the number of readers and users which click on the displayed links, the time allocated to reading the message, etc. (Choi & Varian, 2011), it can be said that articles and news regarding the analyzed topic on the top ten Google pages are relevant to the study in terms of criteria of users and public visibility of the messages.

The grid of analysis comprised 45 items, each with a number of categories ranging from two to 33. Depending on the unit of analysis, the categories were either exclusive, with only one possible category to choose, as in the case of items related to the type of media, type of the article, the tone of the article, the main appeal of the article, or multiple, such as in the case of items respecting the topic of the article, the source of information, the foods presented in the articles, the recommendations and useful information provided, and so on.

## **RESULTS**

### ***How the theme of nutrition and food was covered: patterns of media coverage***

The first items that characterize the coverage of the analyzed topic refer to the type of media in which the articles were published, and the type of articles. As can be seen in Table 1, most of the articles were published in the online format of newspapers (52 articles out of 138, i.e. 38%), followed by

articles on news websites (37 articles, i.e. 27 %), and articles in reviews or magazines (31 articles, i.e. 22%). The articles from other media (websites of TV and radio stations, specialized portals, aggregated websites, news agencies) accounted for a total of 13% of the total of analyzed items, the proportion of articles in each of these media being below 5%.

**Table 1. Types of media in which the articles analyzed were published**

	Type of media (n=138)	Number of articles in:	%
1	Newspaper	52	38
2	News website	37	27
3	Review/ magazine	31	22
4	Specialized portal/platform - nutritional/ medical/ legal website	6	4
5	Website of a TV station	5	4
6	Website of a radio station	4	3
7	Aggregate online site	2	1
8	News agency	1	1
	Total	138	100%

Most of the investigated articles were articles of analysis, which means articles that gave a more detailed approach to the topic of nutrition, analyzes and views of the journalists. From the total of 138 articles, 56 (i.e. 41%) were of this kind, while 32 articles (i.e. 23%) were reportages, meaning those articles in which a particular topic or event, related to the investigated theme, was reported and analyzed, sometimes “on the spot”. On the third place in the analysis were the review articles (18 articles, meaning 13% of the total), that is those articles

that provided a retrospective or recapitulative perspective on a topic of nutrition, or summarized the current state of knowledge/ understanding of the subject, targeting the general public. Other types of analyzed articles were: 13 overview articles (9%), i.e. articles that combined the synthesized content of several specialized articles into one broad-spectrum article; 8 simple news (6%), i.e. those news in which the topic was treated or reported, usually succinct, without the journalist analyzing or expressing his/ her opinion; 6 opinion articles (4%), in which reflections and a well-defined and expressed opinion of the journalist were presented, and 5 interviews (4%).

**Table 2. Types of the articles included in analysis**

	Type of the article (n=138)	Number	%
1	Article of analysis	56	41
2	Reportage	32	23
3	Review article	18	13
4	Overview article	13	9
5	Simple news	8	6
6	Opinion article	6	4
7	Interview	5	4
	Total	138	100%

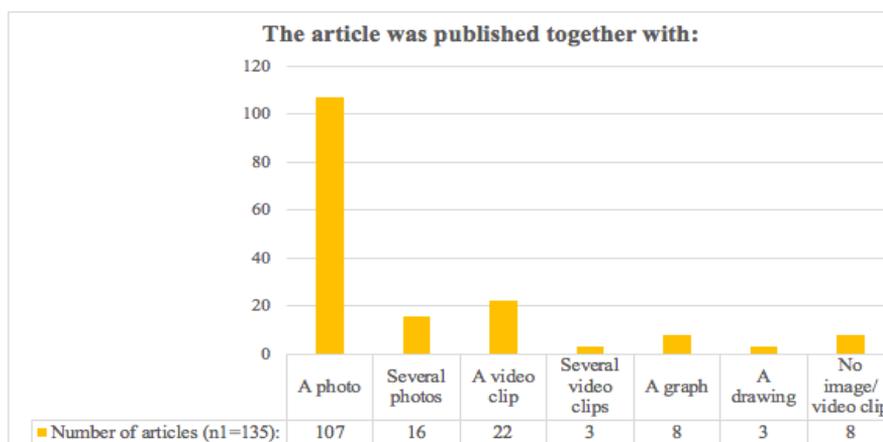
Nutrition was the main topic of most of the analyzed articles (122 of 138, i.e. 88%), while in 13 articles (10%) this was the secondary theme, related to the main theme (e.g. health, various diseases, lifestyle, habits, etc.). Only in three articles from the total of 138 (2%) nutrition was only briefly mentioned. These three articles were not considered for the further items of analysis, therefore the follow-up analysis corpus (n1) was 135 items.

**Table 3. Nutrition and food as topic of the articles**

	Nutrition and/or food(s) is/are: (n=138)	Number	%
1	The main topic of the article	122	88
2	Secondary topic (related to the main topic) of the article	13	10
3	Only briefly mentioned in the article	3	2
	Total	138	100%

From the total of the articles in which nutrition was the main or the secondary topic (n1 = 135), 107 articles were published together with a photo, 16 articles were accompanied by several photos, 22 articles were published together with a video clip, and three articles comprised several video clips. Moreover, in eight articles out of 135 there was included a graph, three articles presented a drawing, and in eight analyzed articles there was no picture/ video clip/ drawing or graph. Thus, a total of 127 articles (n2) were accompanied either by images or by videos.

**Figure 1. Images and videos published together with the articles analyzed**



The most sources used by journalists to gather their information on nutrition and food were of scientific nature. Thus, in 77 out of the 135 analyzed articles the source of the presented information was an academic/ a scientist, or a scientific study or organization. Other frequent sources were also news agencies (in 60 articles) and another media (newspaper/ review/ TV station/ news websites – in 48 cases). In Table 4 can be seen in detail the sources of information in all articles included in the analysis.

**Table 4. Sources of information in the articles analyzed**

	The source of information in the article (n1=135)	Number
1	An academic/ scientist/ a scientific study or organization	77
2	A news agency	60
3	Another media (review/ newspaper/ TV station/ news website	48
4	A physician/ doctor	32
5	A health-care representative/ organization	22
6	A nutritionist	21
7	A state-owned organization	19
8	A consumer organization	8
9	An NGO	7
10	A politician	5
11	A public figure from entertainment and/or show industry	5

12	A chief of gastronomy	5
13	Individuals/ ordinary people	5
14	Social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.)	3
15	Producers in food industry	2
16	A representative of a big corporation/ big business	2
17	Government	1
18	A political party	1
19	Another situation	4

Besides academics, scientific researches and organizations, news agencies and other mass media, other common sources of information were physicians (in 32 articles), health-care representatives or organizations (in 22 articles), nutritionists (in 21 articles) and some state-owned organizations (in 19 articles). Thence, as seen in Table 4, sources of information that could be considered less credible, such as social media, public figures from entertainment or show industry, individuals, representatives of big corporations, etc., have been rarely used in German articles about nutrition during the three years considered.

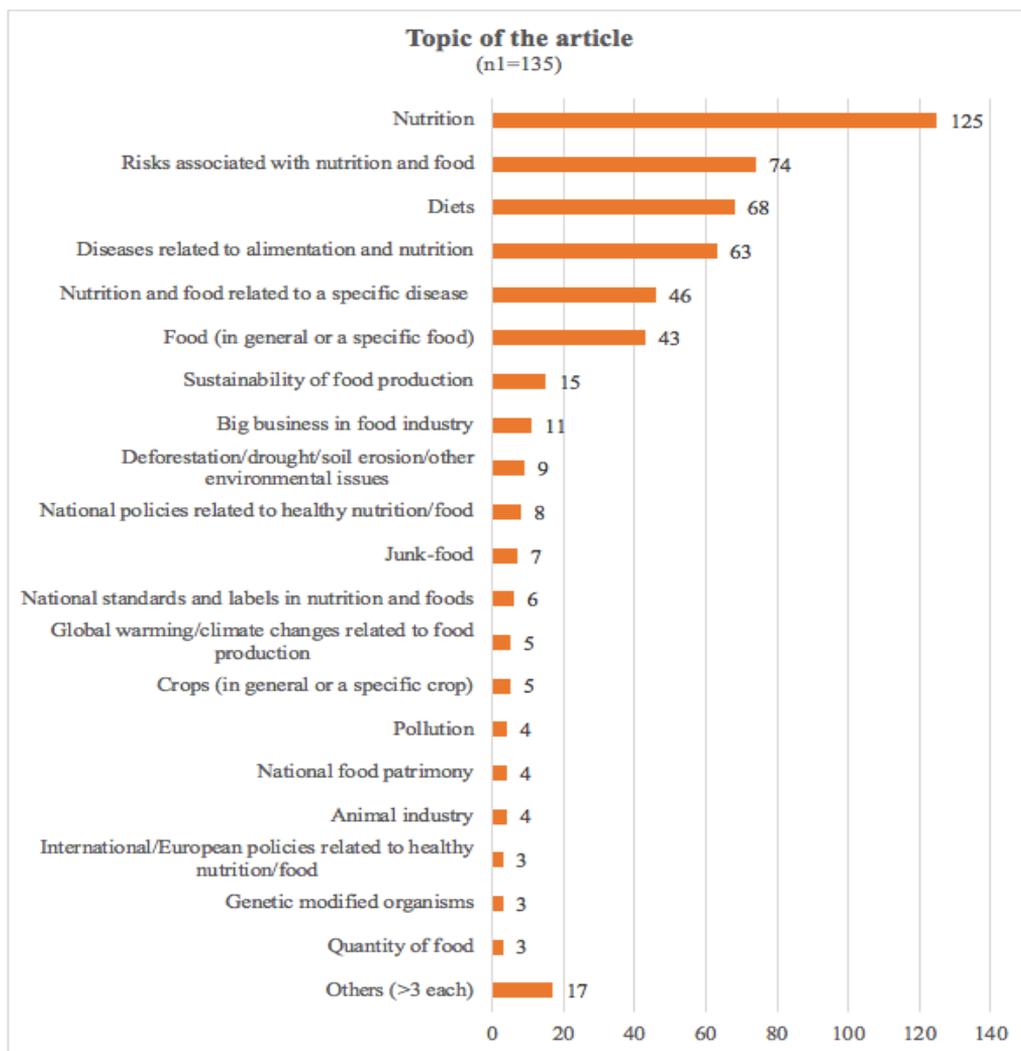
Other points of interest for researching the media coverage of nutrition were to what extent the articles were written in a logical or an emotional manner, respectively the extent to which the articles were written in a neutral tone, or rather in an engaged tone, whether positive or negative. Pursuant to the research findings, almost three quarters of the articles whose content was analyzed, 99 out of 135 (i.e. 73%) have used arguments or descriptions based

on logic (e.g. invoking scientific facts, verified data, real history cases, etc.), while 36 articles (27% of the total) were written in an emotional style, the arguments or descriptions presented being based more on emotions, on the appeal to fear, myths, prejudices or even sophisms. Furthermore, most articles (73%) had a neutral tone, while the rest, in approximately equal proportions, had either a negative or a positive tone. The articles were coded according to the prevailing arguments, respectively the dominant tone, used by their author.

***What was covered in relation to nutrition and food: aspects regarding content of the articles and the debate topics***

According to the research data, most of the articles analyzed (125 out of n1=135) had as main topic nutrition, as general theme. Other important topics in the online German media between 2014 and 2016 were, as seen in Figure 2: the risks associated with nutrition and food, diets, diseases related to alimentation and nutrition, nutrition and food related to a specific disease or illness, food (in general or a specific food), sustainability of food production, and so on.

**Figure 2. Topics of articles analyzed**

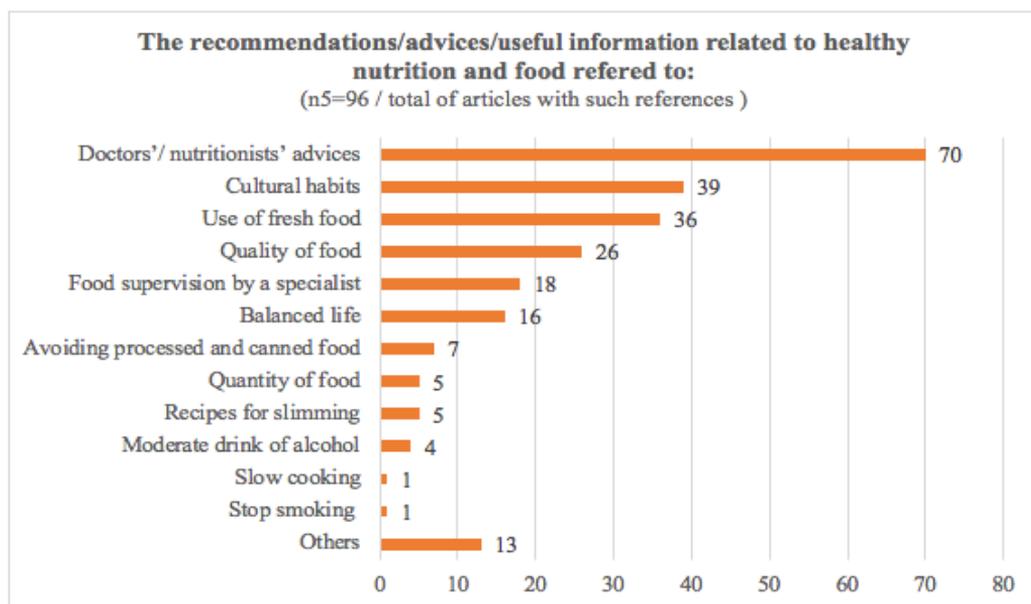


Another point of interest in the research was the extent to which in the articles related to nutrition some foods were presented or mentioned. In the German analyzed articles' texts, food was present in 91% of articles, that is, in 123 articles (n3) out of 135 (n1). Most commonly, both dietary and non-dietary products were presented or mentioned in an article, that being the case for more than three quarters of the analysed items (i.e. 76%). In 11 articles there were

mentioned only dietary products, in 15 articles only non-dietary ones, while in three articles the presented products could not be categorized as dietetic or not dietetic.

The vast majority of the analyzed items presented or at least mentioned en passant recommendations, suggestions, helpful comments and advices for the future with regard to nutrition, diets, and, generally, food and eating. More exactly, in n4=115 articles (i.e. 85% of total) there could be encountered such recommendations and suggestions, which mainly focused on healthy nutrition and health food, as well as on various illnesses and medical conditions. In detail, the references of these recommendations and helpful information can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

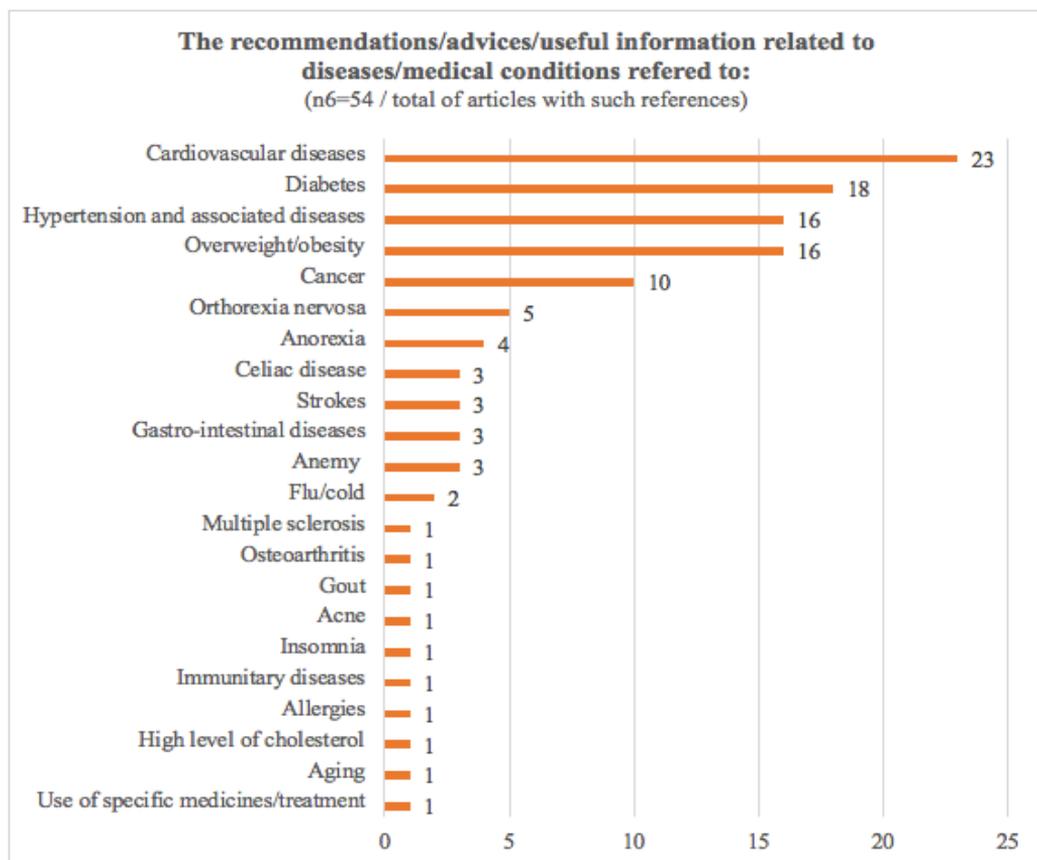
**Figure 3. Recommendations, advices and useful information related to healthy nutrition and health food in the articles analyzed**



The most tips, useful information and recommendations related to healthy food and nutrition referred, as seen in Figure 3, to: doctors' and

nutritionists' advices, cultural habits, use of fresh food, quality of food, maintaining a balanced life, and food supervision by a specialist.

**Figure 4. Recommendations, advices and useful information related to diseases and medical conditions in the articles analyzed**



Although fewer than the articles that provided helpful information and recommendations related to health food and healthy nutrition, a lot of the items analyzed (n6=54) offered also advices, recommendations and useful information concerning different diseases and medical conditions. The most references were made with respect to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, hypertension and the associated diseases, overweight/ obesity, and cancer.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The most common topics and the predominant aspects or issues present in the content of articles on nutrition in German media address health, diseases, and diets. Thus, the most risks associated with nutrition and food (present as theme in 74 articles) related to health issues, as for example a whole lot of articles covering subjects such as the possible negative consequences on health of the wrong nutrition, as well as of giving up on certain foods, just as of the excess in eating certain foods. Furthermore, many diets, especially the vegan one, were looked at from the point of view of their risks on health, particularly in the case of specific population categories, such as children, adolescents and pregnant women.

Moreover, in almost half of the analyzed articles (63), some references have been made regarding various medical conditions and sicknesses and their relation to alimentation and nutrition, the most frequent being cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and the associated diseases, diabetes, obesity, and cancer, while in 46 articles nutrition and foods related to specific diseases or illnesses were mentioned. For example, some articles gave tips about the right nutrition for those people who suffer from specific diseases, for relieving symptoms and improving their medical condition, such lowering high blood pressure or alleviating manifestations and/or effects of anemia, osteoarthritis, acne, insomnia, or flu and cold. Many articles addressed and emphasized the link between wrong nutrition and various disorders, such was the reported case of a teenager who, because didn't eat any vegetables or fruits, lacked of vitamins, and almost blinded. Other articles have drawn attention to the physical dangers of different diets, which are, in fact, not necessary for healthy people, such as the gluten-free diet. While indispensable in case of people suffering from celiac disease (gluten intolerance), this diet can cause to people not affected by this condition various health problems and even lead to gaining

weight. Such information was emphasized in some articles, all the more so as, according to the same articles, while only 2% of the German population suffer from celiac disease, every fourth German avoids gluten or lactose.

Other risks that were highlighted in relation with nutrition were those concerning the environment. Thus, some articles raised and dealt with questions like how nutrition of people, and especially the Western lifestyle, harm the environment and generally our planet, or how some diets (like, once again, the vegan one), considered by their followers environmentally friendly, actually harm the environment, by forcing too many areas to be used as agricultural lands.

The large number of photos and videos that were published along with articles on nutrition issues in the German online media confirms the above-mentioned assessment, namely that media, including print press, turn to visualizations of content, in order to better point out the subject and/ or arguments, but also, probably, at least in specific cases, to stir up emotions and feelings (Hänsli, 2006), in the present trend of journalism toward visualization, emotionalization, and generally sensationalism. According to the collected data, out of the total of photos and videos published together with the articles ( $n_2 = 127$ ), 80% (i.e. images and video clips in 101 articles) presented some foods. In other photos and videos there were also other subjects present, although in a significantly lower proportion.

This pattern of publishing pictures and videos along with texts, also encountered in the case of German media, meant to better point out the information or the advocated view, strengthen the idea of nowadays journalism using “eye catchers”, and maybe the journalistic trend of emotionalization and personalization. Yet, at least in the German case, although some photos showed sometimes shocking or at least uncomfortable images, like fat, unhealthy junk-food, body parts of obese people, or alive pigs in crowded farms, ready to

become a form of “national food”, this visualization trend is not necessarily equivalent to a tabloidization of the press. Because such pictures were only few, while the majority displayed healthy foods, often vegetables, legumes and fruits, and most videos had informative, frequently educational contents and purposes. Besides, though some negative elements might have been seen in some articles, as well as a few sensationalistic ones, especially as for the style of approaching or presenting a subject, one can say that, at least in the regarded time frame, sensationalism, negativity and scandalization were not prevailing in the German media on topic of nutrition. On contrary, most of the articles addressed professionally, often using scientific sources of information, topical and earnest subjects about nutrition and related sub-issues.

The same assessment could be made also by analyzing the tone of the articles, their main appeal and the impression they made. Thus, the prevailing main appeal of the investigated issues was the logical one, i.e. most of them used or based on logical arguments or descriptions, and not on various emotions, and the predominant tone was the neutral one, without subjective, engaged inferences of the authors of the articles. Under these circumstances, the main impression left by most of the analyzed articles was that of credibility and reliability.

The general theme of nutrition, as well as its sub-themes, have been addressed by using different frames and sub-frames, in various types of online media such as newspapers (broadsheets and tabloids), magazines, news websites, television and radio websites, specialized portals or platforms, aggregated websites, and news agencies. Most of the articles about nutrition in the selected period were not simple news, but articles of analysis, reportages, review and overview articles, opinion articles, and so on. This means that, in most cases, the theme of nutrition has not been treated superficially, frugally or slightly, but in-depth, with detailed, sometimes elaborate information, analyses,

points of view, assessments, and deliberations. Besides, nutrition was the main topic of the overwhelming majority of articles resulted from Google search and selected for analysis. Only in a few nutrition was only the secondary theme, while solely an insignificant proportion of articles had the subject of nutrition only briefly mentioned, which made them not to be considered further in the detailed thematic content analysis.

Besides addressing many disputed issues, German media made also many and varied recommendations, gave advices and tips, presented suggestions, practical information and useful opinions regarding nutrition and food. Thus, the majority of analyzed articles (85%) presented a form of recommendations, tips and suggestions, which mainly focused on healthy nutrition and health food, but also on issues with regard to different diseases and medical conditions. Noteworthy is that more than two thirds of these recommendations and useful information have been provided by specialists – doctors and nutritionists, which gives them a certain scientific basis and a high degree of credibility.

Beyond these remarks, one can notice, on the basis of the research results, that while media treated so many issues related to nutrition and food with concern, at the same time they presented a lot of food, reinforcing the aforementioned assessment according to which media constantly attempt to animate food and drink, through the wide range of culinary delights and temptations, and the omnipresent media covered food and drink. Thus, food was present in not less than 91% of articles' texts and in 80% of photographs and video clips, most commonly being mentioned or displayed both dietetic and non-dietetic products. At least by presenting so many non-dietetic products, especially meat and its derivatives (apparitional in nearly two-thirds of the analyzed articles), it can be said that the German media content confirms the paradoxical trend (Stange and Leitzmann, 2010) to mediatize, on the one hand,

the importance of healthy nutrition and worrying topics about food, and in particular its link to health and diseases, and, on the other hand, to further mediatize countless foods, some of them unhealthy, and generally numerous gastronomic enticements.

Finally, it can be said that media coverage of nutrition and food rested also in Germany upon the specifics of the media: while media targeting the general public presented topics related to food and nutrition in a generally understandable manner, selecting them by criteria oriented to everyday life, the specialized media covered topics of nutrition and related issues in-depth, with the accordingly specialized or specific orientations, as for instance medical, educational, agronomical etc. ones. Moreover, broadsheets newspapers tended to make analyses, and to provide deliberations, opinions, or well-documented reports, while tabloids mainly covered questionable issues, topics that may be associated with scandals, providing fewer information and more photos and videos, some of them with shocking content, or at least enough to attract attention. However, one can say that this trend of tabloidization of the press, including negativism, sensationalism, and scandalization, was not prevailing in the German media on topic of nutrition in the regarded time frame. Although some conflicts and disputed subjects were present, they were insignificant compared to the other more serious subjects.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The study presented in this paper has, as any sociological research, some methodological and research design limitations, which to a certain extent can influence the results and their interpretation. Although it is a quantitative research, suitable for statistical inferences, and whose results can be considered representative for the investigated analysis target and the delineated time frame, this representativeness must be considered in the conditions of the restrictions

imposed by the research design and by the methodological procedures chosen. Moreover, being a content analysis, further research on the same subject would be required to verify fidelity and establish the validity of the data presented.

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