

Direct reader address in health-related online news articles: imposing problems and projecting desires for action and change onto readers

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Abstract:

The digitalisation and commercialisation of the news mean journalistic practices are changing. Traditionally, readers are not addressed in written news stories. This study documents practices of direct reader address in online news headlines on health topics from three Nordic countries. The study focuses on the linguistic means of constructing the reader and journalist-reader relationship through forms of direct address. For this purpose, we take pragmatic-interactional and discourse-analytical approaches. Building on a discursive view on news values, the paper analyses three practices of addressing readers in headlines, outlines how news values are discursively constructed through these practices, and examines how journalists construct their target audience discursively by imposing problems and projecting desires for action and change onto readers, indicating assumptions about the readers' knowledge. We argue that, by using such practices, journalists construct journalistic authority.

Keywords:

address strategies; discourse analysis; headlines; health news; media frame; news values; Nordic newspapers.

Introduction

Relationships between journalists and their audiences are mostly established through mediated interaction. Carlson suggests that this interaction may be viewed as an exchange: audiences give attention to news and journalists provide knowledge about events that audiences would otherwise not have access to (2017, 13). This also means that the relationships are inherently asymmetrical and, according to Carlson (2017, 17), form the basis for journalistic authority. However, this authority must be discursively constructed through positioning in interaction. Within journalism, norms of neutrality and objectivity have been and are still practiced, among other things using specific styles, story forms and sources through which events are presented as factual, thus working to perform and enhance authority (Carlson 2017).

These norms and practices have contributed to shaping journalism as being a profession with exclusive rights to collect and distribute ‘factual information’ about current events (Lewis 2012).

As argued by Carlson (2017, 18), the authority of a journalist relies on the fact that audiences accept journalists as someone with expertise in terms of interacting with sources, documents and audiences and as someone who communicates news in an easily understandable and accessible form that appeal to a wide audience. Thus, journalistic authority does not only rely on how facts are collected and communicated, but also on how the journalist takes the audiences’ knowledge and expectations into consideration. Further, it is no longer the case that journalists have exclusive access to collecting and distributing information about what is going on in the world.

The supply of news on online platforms provides journalists with new affordances for presenting and selling news, and audiences new affordances for consuming news compared with the traditional paper format. Consequently, practices for presenting news have changed and are still changing (Deuze 2008; Deuze and Witschge 2018). These changes have been noted and studied, for example, regarding the use of multimodal resources and convergence (Ksiazek, Peer, and Lessard 2016) and changing practices for constructing headlines (Blom and Hansen 2015). Additionally, news readers’ practices are changing. Online news consumers share news online, which has led researchers to suggest “shareability” as a news value (Harcup and O’Neill 2017, 11). The changing possibilities for, and practices of, reading and representing the news also change the relationship between readers and journalists, as digital news increases participation and interactivity among the participants (Ksiazek, Peer, and Lessard 2016). Online news readers may comment on and discuss news stories in comment sections, which may lead to direct interaction between journalists and readers (Holton, Lee, and Coleman 2014). Increased interactivity in journalistic discourse provides possibilities for increasing audience participation (Peters and Witschge 2015), but may also be used to challenge journalistic authority as audiences may engage in the production of news (Lewis 2012), provide alternative accounts themselves (Johansson 2017) and otherwise challenge journalists’ production of news by engaging in discussions about news production and news stories through publicly mediated interaction such as comment sections, blogs, discussion fora, tweets etc. Beyond these more conversational forms of interaction, journalists also interact with their audiences through the content they produce. A primary

site of this interaction is news headlines, which are in most cases the audience's first encounter with the journalist's content and a portal to the rest of the story.

In this paper we investigate journalistic-audience relationships as they are discursively performed and assumed through direct address forms in headlines to only news stories, i.e. linguistic resources that create a sense of interactivity and assume an interpersonal relationship between a journalist and his/her audience, and we show how news values may be discursively constructed by combining direct address forms with other linguistic resources, thus working to legitimise the story discursively. Based on a discursive analysis of three patterns of headlines with direct address forms in news articles on illness and health in two online newspapers from Denmark, Sweden and Finland, respectively, we discuss the journalistic-audience relationships that are constructed in terms of how journalistic authority is alluded to through these strategies. We also discuss how the discursively constructed and assumed relationship between journalists and their audiences make assumptions about the reader and thereby moralise on readers' behalf.

Discursively constructed news values

Traditionally, journalism is taught and practiced based on assessments and ascriptions of news values to events (O'Neill and Harcup 2009). These often include "timeliness, relevance, identification, conflict and sensation" (Schultz 2007), but the concept of news values is considered a "slippery" one (O'Neill and Harcup 2009, 162). In recent studies on journalism, news values have been considered from the perspective of the influence of both broadcast news and social media. Harcup and O'Neill (2017) argue that news consumers' practices of sharing news stories on platforms like Facebook and Twitter contribute to a change in the traditional relationship between journalists as active and audiences as passive. O'Neill and Harcup (2009) indicate that economic, cultural, and social changes also affect the audience and the media market and, consequently, possibly news value criteria. An increasingly commercial media market is considered a factor when understanding contemporary news values, leading to the view that "news must be selected and packaged in a format that is audience-oriented and commercial by being entertaining and reflecting popular tastes" (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009, 166).

Whereas the abovementioned news values concern the news process and market factors, we adopt a discursive view of news values (cf. Bednarek and Caple 2012) because we focus on news values that are discursively constructed in headlines and linked to reader considerations through direct address forms. According to (Bednarek and Caple 2017, 37, 67), news values have to be considered in a given community, i.e., they are dependent on context and audience. Following (Bednarek and Caple 2017), we assume that headlines as other news discourse "construct an ideal reader who agrees with the preferred meaning" (2017, 67). This means that news texts may be directive in terms of the attitudes and ideologies they want readers to share.

Within a discursive framework, the following may be considered news values that may contribute to making a story newsworthy: aesthetic appeal, consonance, eliteness, impact, negativity, personalisation, positivity, superlativeness, timeliness, and unexpectedness (Bednarek and Caple 2017, 55). For our collection of health stories, the news value personalisation is particularly interesting. Personalisation as a news value concerns "the personal or human interest aspects of an event" (Bednarek and Caple 2012,

44). According to Bednarek and Caple (2012), personalisation gives the news story a human face by showing how the story impacts news actors and may be achieved discursively, for example, by using references to individuals and quotes from ordinary people such as eyewitness accounts. Health may concern various aspects of public health as well as physical and mental well-being, and, thus, as a topic, health stories lend themselves well to being “personalised”. However, that being said, using direct reader address as a strategy to personalise a health story in its headline, has, to our knowledge, not been singled out as a recurrent strategy in traditional print newspapers. Therefore, we hypothesise that this specific strategy may be related to both the topic and to the fact that the stories occur online.

As we will elaborate on below, by addressing readers explicitly and individually using first-person singular pronouns and imperative constructions, personalisation as a news value is constructed, and the texts explicitly make assumptions about readers’ attitudes, experiences and ideologies. Further, by discursively constructing the reader as a news actor through direct address in the headline, other news values may be created and linked to the reader as well. In our collection, this concerns consonance (i.e. how stories tie with stereotypes that people hold), unexpectedness, superlativeness (i.e. the construction of ‘more-ness’ (Bednarek and Caple 2017, 64)), and impact (i.e. effects or consequences of an event) in particular.

Headlines

This paper focuses on how news values are reflected in the discursive practices used to create online news headlines. The purpose of a headline is to summarise the story and catch the attention of readers (Bednarek and Caple 2012, 96; van Dijk 1983). The headline of a news story works as a textual negotiator between the story and its readers. It serves the rhetoric function of attracting the attention of the reader by using strategies that create optimal relevance using very short clauses (Dor 2003). Language in headlines is used to engender interpersonal functions between the author, the text and the reader, and the particular function of language is important (Halliday and Webster 2014). Interpersonal functions include constructions of social roles and relations, focusing on aspects such as formality, intimacy and distance. Interpersonal functions are, for example, indicated and explored discursively through the use of pronouns and clausal mood (Haratyan 2011).

In early work on news discourse, Bell (1991) considers the strategies speakers use to address their addressee as a question of audience design. Bell examines how style suits the audience using very few linguistic variables (Bell 1991, 107). Headlines focus readers’ interest by various means: topics, arguments, locations, or goals (van Dijk 1988, 35-6). According to Bednarek and Caple (2012, 100-4), headlines have multiple functions, including an interpersonal function and ‘headlinese’ based on various visual and linguistic features. In his work on news, Chovanec (2014, 5) concentrates on temporal deixis (tense, adverbials of time) and how this affects the way news discourse and headlines develop an interpersonal dimension.

One of the journalistic practices that has changed in online news articles, when compared with traditional newspaper articles, is that of headline formulation. Contemporary news texts are digital texts with multimodal and hypertextual characteristics (Johansson, 2014: 34). In digital news texts, headlines work as internal hypertextual links that make readers click on the headline to navigate to the full article (Chovanec 2014, 60; Johansson, 2014, 36). Using catchy headlines to lure readers to click on the headline is a practice often referred to as clickbait. In digital texts, one of the features of clickbait headlines can be their target on popular issues or sensationalism (Molek-Kozakowska 2013). In their article, Blom and Hansen (2015) analyse forward-referencing as a device for achieving a clickbait effect. Based on a deictic view, Blom and Hansen define forward-referencing as referencing forthcoming parts of the discourse relative to the current location and reference to words or a phrase later in the text (2015, 87). The authors show how cataphora and discourse deixis are used to link the headline and the news story, i.e., textual referencing. In our case, we focus on personal pronouns that index participants in the communication situation, but, as we will show, they can also function as a forward-referencing device.

The use of direct address forms is not mentioned as a conventional feature of (hard) news headlines (Chovanec 2014, 119), but it is a means of building relations in advertisements (Fairclough 1989, 205). Focusing on headlines that have direct address forms, and, viewing headlines as part of a discursive activity as outlined below, this paper intends to show not only how the reader becomes anchored to the news story through direct address forms, but also, in particular, how journalists moralise on their readers' behalf by using such practices. It should be noted that it is in fact not the journalist who usually composes the final headline; it is the news editors (Dor 2003). However, as it is the journalist who is presented as the author of the story to the audience, we will simply refer to the journalist as the author of the headline since the headline of the story is a part of the news text authored by the journalist.

Media frames and terms of address

News discourse is communication intended for news consumers. Based on a participation framework (Goffman 1981), it is possible to say that readers are ratified participants and addressees of news (Johansson 2014, 36). Furthermore, written and spoken media communication involves double articulation: first, there is a communicative interaction between the journalists and their sources, interviewees, or quoted persons, and second, a mediated communicative interaction between media producers and their audiences (cf. Scannell 1991, 1) that take place within two interactional frames (Fetzer 2006; Johansson 2014, 34). In news discourse, readers are not usually addressed, though addressing can take place in broadcast media, such as in interviews where interactants can refer to the media frame with other references or terms of address (Fetzer 2006).

Terms of address have been discussed widely in linguistic literature (Clyne, Norrby, and Warren 2009). In their seminal paper, Brown and Gilman (1960) discuss the evolution of pronominal use in Romance languages and in German concerning for example the French “*tu*” (singular *you*) and “*vous*” (plural *you* and politeness form). In

more recent studies, such as that of Clyne, Norrby, and Warren (2009), the object of research is put on interactional or other speech situations, including how the use of pronouns and other forms of address is indexical, deriving their meaning in the ongoing situation. As with any discursive activity, whether spoken or written, news discourse is also indexical and relational (cf. Gumperz 1992, 43-5). Indexicality must be examined regarding social acts, identities, and activities, as well as affective and epistemic stances in a given communicative situation (Ochs 1996). Social identities include roles, relationships, and group identities (Ochs 1996, 410). By social acts, Ochs (1996, 410) refers to linguistic (speech) acts, such as requests and offers. Therefore, the pronoun “you” not only refers to an addressee but indexes a social category by which some meanings are constructed (Duranti 1997, 19). The use of linguistic forms that may point to a certain discourse community can be interpreted as socially ideological, positioning speakers in a certain way. This view stems from Silverstein's (2003) indexical order, where he criticises Brown and Gilman's (1960) take on the pronominal address.

There are, however, few studies on address strategies in written media situations. In a cross-linguistic study of opinion columns in newspapers, Dafouz-Milne (2008) mentions direct address to readers as an interpersonal metadiscourse marker that helps to establish reader-writer rapport through the text. Breeze (2015) specifically investigated the use of second person pronouns in editorials, a journalistic genre used to influence an audience by putting forward opinions and arguments. She argues that the uses of “you” she found in editorials in *The Guardian* may include several functions that work to involve the reader, including connecting with readers' lives and simulating interaction, and she suggests this is symptomatic of an informal tone and an increase in personalisation (Breeze 2015, 42).

Data

This article is based on structured and coordinated data collection in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Along with Norway, the three countries, according to Brüggemann et al. (2014), have similar media systems based on measurements on four dimensions, including journalistic professionalism. Since the countries belong to the same cluster, one hypothesis is that we will find similar journalistic practices in newspapers from all three countries. During August 2016, we registered all online articles about health and illness from the two most widespread journals in each of the three countries. One time per day, before 10 AM, we checked the online articles on the landing page, as well as in the relevant sections, such as Health and Training and Exercise. In the summertime, many institutions are closed, and many people are on holiday. Consequently, news organisations may not necessarily have a lot of stories to tell. Our data therefore inform us about journalists and editors' practices of constructing stories on health as newsworthy by using specific linguistic practices in headlines. Thus, in supplementing studies on health news that tend to focus on how health as a topic is constructed (Briggs and Hallin 2016), we focus on the journalist-audience relationships that are discursively created and on the construction of journalistic authority through indications of news values. We decided to collect headlines from both the tabloid and omnibus press as to present a holistic picture of the newspapers' content when targeting different audience types.

In Denmark, we collected the online part of the tabloid newspaper, *B.T. (Danish tabloid, DT)*, and the online part of the cultural-radical omnibus newspaper, *Politiken*

(*Danish omnibus, DO*). In Sweden, we collected the online part of the social democrat tabloid, *Aftonbladet* (*Swedish tabloid, ST*), and the online part of the main independent, liberal national newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter* (*Swedish omnibus, SO*). In Finland, we collected the online part of the most visited tabloid news site, *Ilta-Sanomat* (*Finnish tabloid, FT*), and the online part of the biggest national newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat* (*Finnish omnibus, FO*).

For this article, our data consist of material comprising only articles in which readers are addressed in the headlines, resulting in the following sample:

[Insert Table 1 here]

Table 1 shows the number of headlines using direct address, including directives, as well as the total number of health-related articles collected for all six newspapers. Apart from the Danish omnibus (81 articles) and the Finnish omnibus (69 articles), the newspapers contained a homogenous number of health-related articles across the three countries (from 33 to 41 articles). Despite the large total number of health-related articles, the Finnish omnibus contained only four headlines using direct address, including directives, whereas the Danish omnibus contained 24 headlines using direct address, including directives. The rest of the newspapers contained from 7 to 14 articles using direct address, including directives.

This study focuses on the linguistic means of constructing journalist-reader relations through direct address forms. For this purpose, we use the pragmatic-interactive and discourse-analytical approaches in order to analyse the *discursive meaning* in the headlines. In this qualitative methodological approach, first, we analysed the kind of communicative acts, i.e. action units writers include in headlines. We analysed how they contribute an intersubjective (or an interpersonal) relationship that allows establishing common ground and other types of shared knowledge between writers and readers (Halliday 1985; Clark 1996). We observed how these communicative acts include the reader, make assumptions about the reader, and invite the reader to act. We related these acts to news values to show how news values are discursively created by including the readers in the media frame of the news stories.

The linguistic analysis had several phases between three languages, from which Swedish and Danish belong to the same language family of Germanic languages, whereas Finnish belongs to a Finno-Ugric language family which translates into different kinds of constructions and uses of direct address. In our initial analysis, we studied first the lexicogrammatical construction of the headlines regarding address forms, the grammatical construction of imperatives, questions, or elliptical constructions (i.e., constructions in which a verb is left out, but the reader is implied), such as Finnish “*piirrä*” (draw). The data includes modal constructions as well, although Chovanec (2014: 120) mentions a tendency to avoid modal constructions in headlines. The modal constructions have been analysed according to the communicative act, and we have examples of modal constructions in all of the three patterns shown below. The direct address forms examined are personal pronouns in the first and second person and plural in all their possible forms. In Danish, we found the forms “*du*”, “*dig*”, “*din*”, “*dit*”, “*vi*”, “*I*”, “*jer*”, in Swedish, “*du*”, “*dig*”, “*din*”, “*ditt*” and in Finnish, we found “*sinulla*” the second-person singular verbal conjugation (“*-t(-)*” in “*pidät*” (keep), “*saatat*” (you may), and “*viljeletkö*” (do you

frequently use [a phrase]), and possessive suffixes on nouns (“-si” in “elämäsi” (your life), “elämättesi” (from your life) “aamiaisesi” (your breakfast). The Finnish language does not use personal pronouns in the same way Danish and Swedish do, and constructions such as “sinun elämäsi” (your life) would be a marked form.

The examples are translated by the authors. The translations are literally as accurate as possible so that they convey the meaning embedded in the headlines (Dor 2003, 708).

Inviting the reader to identify with a health problem: Imposing problems on readers

In our collection, direct reader address constructed in a question was found in 13 headlines. Occasionally, questions are used in hard news headlines for the sake of variety (Chovanec 2014, 198). Questions in newspaper discourse, such as editorials, are often rhetorical, as the writer already knows the answer, and as an answer from the reader is not required (Badarneh 2009).

In our collection, questions in the headlines overwhelmingly invite readers to reflect on their practice or dispositions relating to an indicated health topic; they were formulated as yes/no-type questions. Headlines of this type also often entail identity categories the reader is invited to relate to. Consequently, the readers are invited to reflect on whether they belong to the category of people who perform the relevant actions habitually and whether they are members of the indicated identity categories.

In the following example, a headline is comprised of a yes/no question combined with a statement summarising a news story:

(1)

Do **you** know the feeling? Every other woman regrets having eaten
Kender **du** følelsen? Hver anden kvinde fortryder at have spist
(DT, 16/8)

When used in talk, such yes/no-type questions incorporate a “candidate answer” (Pomerantz 1988). According to Pomerantz (1988), inquiries that include candidate answers provide recipients with a model answer and display the information seeker’s understanding of the type of information thought to be relevant for the current purpose. Consequently, yes/no questions including direct address forms in newspaper headlines may be viewed as regular questions, as the journalist does not know the answer. More specifically, these questions involve built-in identification with the indicated health issue as the default expectation. In this way, the questions impose problems on the readers. In example 1, the reader is invited to reflect on whether (s)he recognises a feeling: the experience of regretting having eaten, which is specified by the claim that follows the question. This claim may be read as the summary of the news story that will appear when clicking on the headline. The headline also specifies that the disposition to regret having eaten is associated with the category “woman”. Thus, readers are invited to reflect on

how they treat themselves after having eaten and on how this behaviour is associated with a social category, namely, gender.

In example 2, the headline also invites the reader to reflect on his or her practice. On this occasion, however, it is not internal reflection but interpersonal action, namely, that of talking to one's child:

(2)
Have **you** talked to **your** bullyboy today?
Har du talt med din mobbedreng i dag?
(DO, 18/8)

This headline invites the reader to identify as a parent by—creatively¹—using the identity category “mobbedreng” (bullyboy), associated with the reader through the possessive pronoun “din” (your). Using a yes/no-formatted question inquiring about a specific action related to being a parent (namely, talking to one's child) has been performed on the specific day of reading the headline (“i dag”, today), a “yes” answer is constructed as the model answer, and, consequently, talking to one's child every day is implied as the norm; there are moral implications if you do not follow this norm. The identity category “mobbedreng” (bullyboy) also indicates this; if you do not talk to your son, he might become a bully.

These headlines ask readers to identify with behaviour framed as problematic. In example 3, from the Swedish omnibus, readers are asked to consider whether they belong to the category of people who google symptoms, a behaviour that may be considered ordinary when experiencing health issues. The yes/no question asking readers to consider their practices, is, in this case, combined with an imperative construction that indicates there may be something to consider regarding such behaviour. Therefore, the headline implies that such behaviour might have moral implications:

(3)
Do **you** google your symptoms – think about this
Googlar du på symptom – tank på det här
(SO, 11/8)

Headlines of this sort, combining direct address, yes/no-formatted questions inviting readers to reflect on their own experiences, dispositions, and identity categories, clearly personalise a news story by inviting the reader to centre the story in his or her ordinary life. Indications of assumed ordinary and habitual practices of the reader create an ideal reader for the story. In this way, the news value consonance comes into play. Consonance is defined as “the construction of an event's news actors, social groups, organizations or countries/nations in a way that confirms stereotypes that members of the target audience hold about them” (Bednarek and Caple 2017, 57). Thus, elements in the news story, i.e. actions, dispositions and social categories, are linked to the ideal – and stereotypical – reader who becomes a news actor through direct address forms which creates consonance. Further, the actions and dispositions the reader is invited to identify

¹ Spelled ‘moppedreng’, it refers to a big person or object according to a Danish dictionary (*Den Danske Ordbog. Det danske sprog- og litteraturselskab*, 2018. <http://ordnet.dk/>)

with are constructed as negative through the use of certain words (“regret”; “bullyboy”) and/or by indicating that action is called for (“think”) in case the reader sees herself or himself as someone who carries out the action concerned.

In examples from the Finnish tabloid shown below, specific habitual behaviour (“bad habits”) or recurrent health issues (fluctuating blood pressure) is also indicated as negative in headlines that include yes/no-type questions that attempt to make the reader identify with a health issue.

(4)

Massive research: Do **you** have these bad habits? The healthy part of **your** lifetime is shortened by eight years

*Jättitutkimus: Onko **sinulla** näitä huonoja elintapoja? Terve elämäsi lyhenee kahdeksalla vuodella*

(FT, 3/8)

(5)

Is [your] blood pressure fluctuating? **You** may be at risk of getting seriously ill

Heitteleekö verenpaine? Saatat olla vaarassa sairastua vakavasti

(FT, 26/8)

In examples 4 and 5, consequences of specific behaviour or health issues the ideal reader is assumed to be likely to identify with (cf. the yes/no question format used) is identified. Thus, personalisation and impact as news values are constructed in the headline, and the combination of the two using direct address forms shows the reader how the news story is likely to have an “effect of the audience’s own lives or closeness to their experiences”. This means that impact for the reader is explicated rather than implied. Impact is outlined but also foregrounded by constructing consequences as having significance, in these cases by pointing to the scope (“eight years”) and intensity (“seriously”), i.e. the news value superlativeness is also used to legitimise the news story as relevant for the reader. The news values impact and superlativeness constructed here are constructed relative to a personalised perspective constructed through direct reader address.

Making claims about what the reader knows, and implying what the reader should know and do

According to Dor (2003), the most appropriate headlines consider what the reader already knows. We found six headlines each in the Danish and Swedish data, but only one in the Finnish data, i.e., 13 headlines altogether. These occurrences include negated claims in constructions with direct address forms. Such constructions reject sets of beliefs regarding health that are explicitly associated with the reader, for example, by making claims about the readers’ beliefs or behaviours related to an indicated health issue.

In one instance, a headline in a tabloid includes a claim about the reader's current knowledge, which is then rejected:

(6)

Your cheese sandwich is not as innocent as **you think**

Din ostemad er slet ikke så uskyldig, som **du tror**

(DT, 3/8)

The headline explicitly makes claims regarding the reader's current beliefs about the health value of cheese sandwiches by including a second person pronoun ("du", you) and an epistemic verb ("tro", think). This belief is challenged with a negated comparison phrase ("ikke så ... som ..." not as ... as ...). The headline also includes a referent associated with the reader by using a possessive pronoun ("din", your). Thus, it is presupposed that the reader eats cheese sandwiches, and assumed the reader feels the personal relevance of the story.

In omnibus newspapers, news stories may also be presented as negated claims about beliefs and behaviour linked to the reader:

(7)

It is not just **your** behaviour that determines whether **you** suffer from a lifestyle disease

*Det er ikke kun **din** adfærd, der bestemmer, om **du** får en livsstilssygdom*

(DO, 17/8)

(8)

You cannot eat **yourself** cured from cancer

***Du** kan inte äta **dig** frisk från cancer*

(SO, 16/8)

The headlines in examples 7 and 8 include rejections of causal relationships between behaviour and (cure from) illness. In both examples, the actual or possible behaviour is associated with the reader through direct address forms. By making such claims and linking them to the readers' current or possible behaviour, the headlines include assumptions about the readers' current beliefs and how those beliefs could be linked to behaviour. By negating the claims, the headlines also imply that the current belief is insufficient for understanding and, in some cases, dealing with the health-related matters indicated in the headline. The headlines imply that knowledge directly relevant to the individual reader will be presented in the news story. This combines several strategies. Using direct address terms ("din" (your); "du" (you); "dig" yourself) and a negated claim ("ikke", not); "inte", not) accomplishes a clickbait effect, as well as presenting the personal relevance of the story to the reader. The implication is, of course, that if the reader reads the news story, his or her beliefs regarding the relationships between behaviour and illness will be corrected, leading to changed behaviour and an increased chance of leading a healthy life. In these cases, unexpectedness and impact, as news values, are accomplished discursively through negated declarative constructions using direct address forms. Bednarek and Caple (2017, 66) note that, as with other news values, unexpectedness to some degree depends on the target audience such that it may

be challenging to determine whether some information given would in fact be surprising to the audience. However, in the cases with direct address forms shown here, the headlines make assumptions about readers' current knowledge explicit in order to construct the news story as newsworthy for the audience.

Some headlines with direct address terms formulated as claims do not entail negations. This type of headline is exemplified by two examples from the Swedish tabloid. These headlines achieve newsworthiness by making claims about information indicated to have a significant impact for the ideal reader, and which is not presented in the headline, but which will, by implication, be found in the article:

(9)

Your period may determine how long **you** live

Din mens kan avgöra hur länge *du* lever

(ST, 9/8)

(10)

We are on the edge of a pandemic. Warmer climate results in more infections

Vi är på randen av en pandemi. Varmare klimat ger fler infektioner

(ST, 21/8)

By combining direct address with claims about health information indicated to be significant for the reader through the use of superlativeness as a news value (“how long”; “pandemic”; “more infections”), the headlines imply that the news story potentially entails significant information for the target audience. Further, the target audience is constructed through address forms in combination with the specific categories and types of health issues indicated in the headlines. In example 9, the phrase “din mens” (your period) indicates that the story has specific relevance for women and indicates an assumption that the reader is female. In example 10, the 1st person plural pronoun “vi” (we), used as part of a claim about an imminent pandemic, presents the state of affairs as something relevant to the target readers. 1st person plural pronouns are mentioned by Bednarek and Caple (2012, 52) as a device to construct proximity as a news value. Proximity refers to both geographical and cultural nearness of the event. Consequently, the news values personalisation and proximity are constructed, as readers are included in the media frame, anchoring them to the story and indexing the social categories.

Encouraging and instructing the reader: Projecting a desire to act and change

Some headlines impose on the reader by encouraging or instructing them to act. Such actions are found in directives and “this is how” constructions. In our collection, we identified 52 headlines with such constructions (Danish, 28; Swedish, 17; and Finnish, 7).

Kaur, Arumugam, and Yunus (2013) found that imperatives were a frequently used linguistic feature of beauty product advertisements and argued that these worked to

persuade readers to buy or take certain actions. Imperative constructions, when read as implicitly addressing the reader, index assumptions about the readers' knowledge. The encouraged actions are understood relative to the situation the reader is reading about. In some headlines, the readers are simply encouraged to navigate to the news story to obtain further information, as seen in example 11:

(11)

Kristian, 44, from 11, lost as many as 100 kilograms—**see** the before and after pictures

*Iläinen Kristian, 44, laihdutti peräti 100 kiloa—**kats**o kuvat ennen ja jälkeen*

(FT, 19/8)

As the imperatives refer to information in the full article, they can be viewed as instances of forward-referencing and a clickbait strategy (Blom and Hansen 2015, 95). Besides this function, headlines that include imperatives in our corpus frequently lure the reader with information he or she can use to improve his or her health:

(12)

See the list: Here are 8 food products that can affect your appearance

Se listen: Her er 8 madvarer der kan påvirke dit udseende

(DT, 4/8)

(13)

Test if 5:2 diet can work for you

Testa om 5:2-dieten kan fungera för dig

(ST, 11/8)

The headlines in examples 12 and 13 lure the reader with a list of food products and a diet. In both cases, the information that is referred to is presented as something with the potential to improve the reader's physical appearance. This potential is indicated in a construction with the modal verb "kan" (can). Thus, the headlines assume that the reader has an interest in improving his or her health by encouraging him or her to consult information that might be used to change his or her behaviour. Furthermore, the impact of the news story is foregrounded for the reader regarding how such information can be applied directly and concretely in the reader's everyday life.

In the Danish and Swedish data, we also find many instances of "This is how"-constructions; in particular, the construction is used in the tabloids. In the Danish material it is found in the form of the adverb "sådan" (this is how; so), and in the Swedish, in the form of the adverb "så" (so) or the adverbs "så här" (in this way). The construction refers to a specification or method of how to carry out some action; it was a frequently used clickbait strategy in Danish consumer news (Blom and Hansen, 2015: 97). Combining "this is how" constructions with direct address forms serves the function of presenting particular procedures, i.e., instructions, which will be relevant to the reader and specified in the full text:

(14)

Pernille Blume can do it to perfection: **How to** learn to swim crawl
Pernille Blume kan det til perfektion: Sådan lærer du at svømme crawl
(DO, 14/8)

(15)
You get rid of lower back pain **this easily**
Så enkelt slipper du smærta I ländryggen
(ST, 5/8)

(16)
This is how you retain a good memory
Så behåller du goda minnesfunktioner
(SO, 26/8)

The headlines in examples 14–16 lure readers with instructions for how to improve their health: instructions on how to swim (example 14), get rid of back problems (example 15), and retain a good memory (example 16). The headlines assume stances, wants, needs, and problems on the readers' behalf (such as a desire to learn to swim); they then encourage readers to act on these stances, wants, needs, and problems by following instructions.

As examples 12–16 in this section illustrate, many headlines formulated with directives and “this is how” constructions encourage readers to consult the news story to obtain information about how to change their behaviour to improve their health. Some imperative constructions in the corpus, however, involve specific encouragement to engage readers in action relative to a part of their life related to health:

(17)
Pat your colleague on the shoulder! Praise has a surprising effect on your work
Klap din kollega på skulderen! Ros har en overraskende effekt på dit arbejde
(DT, 23/8)

(18)
Protect yourself from the wasps. Elderly more likely to be allergic to wasp stings
Skydda dig mot getingarna. Äldre mest utsatta för allergi mot getingstick
(SO, 14/8)

(19)
Surprising way to cheer up: **draw** a strawberry or a cupcake
Yllättävä keino piristyä: piirrä mansikka tai kuppikakku
(FO, 11/8)

The imperative constructions in examples 17–19 can be read as instructions or encouragements directed towards the reader. Readers are encouraged to act in a certain way in the future as part of specific contexts assumed as part of the readers' present,

everyday life. These contexts are created by using one or two words—frequently, a nominal phrase syntactically placed as the object of the construction. In some cases, the reality of the contexts for the readers is implied or assumed by using possessive pronouns (e.g., “din kollega”, your colleague), or by making use of a definite form (“getingarna”, the wasps).

The above headlines all present the encouraged action as being (potentially) beneficial when combined with a clause including imperative constructions. In these clauses, the benefits of the actions are, for example, indicated as “overraskende effect” (surprising effect); “skydda” (protect); and “yllättävä keino piristystä” (surprising way to cheer up). Consequently, these constructions point to the potential impact of the news story for readers. Some of these clauses also explicitly indicate that the benefits are “surprising”, thus, implying a challenge to the readers’ present knowledge and thereby constructing the news value unexpectedness. Furthermore, the headlines do not present details regarding, for example, how, how often, and when to perform the indicated action, or arguments for why the action is beneficial. Thus, readers might want to know why and how to carry out the encouraged action and might be lured to read the full text.

In sum, through combinations of imperatives and other linguistic resources, news stories are constructed as directly relevant for readers’ lives, as they are framed as having the potential to improve the readers’ health *if* they choose to follow the encouragements and instructions. By including the reader in the media frame through direct address forms, personalisation, as a news value, is discursively constructed and indications of the impact and unexpectedness of the story are used to attract the attention of the reader.

The same applies to some headlines with direct address forms and modal constructions such as the following:

(20)

With these mental tricks **you** can keep your workout going through the hard times

Näillä mestariurheilijoiden mentaalikikoilla pidät treenin käynnissä hankalina hetkinä.

(HS, 18/8)

Here, information implied to be provided in the article about “mental tricks” is presented as a possible solution to the target reader who is constructed to be someone who exercises and sometimes experiences obstacles. The direct address is in the personal verbal conjugation “-t” in “pidät” (2nd person singular; keep). Thus, as example (4) and (5) also show, direct address forms are indicated in different ways grammatically in the Finnish examples than in the Danish and Swedish examples.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, we focused on the use of direct address in online news stories on health and illness in two online newspapers in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, respectively.

In our data, direct address in headlines for health-related news stories occurs in both tabloid and omnibus newspapers, and it occurs more frequently in the Danish and Swedish newspapers than in the Finnish ones (see Table 1). Table 2, below, shows that the question format is not frequently used in the Swedish newspapers, and knowledge challenges were only found once in the Finnish data. The reason for the slight discrepancy between the numbers shown in Tables 1 and 2 is that some headlines are constructed using several strategies and, consequently, belong to more than one pattern.

[Insert Table 2 here]

The differences in the data are most clear in the third pattern, where the Finnish use is low compared to the Danish and Swedish usages. This creates a hypothesis for further research: why do Danish and Swedish journalists rely on this media frame? Are they relying on practices that have evolved within the new type of journalistic practices? Or is it simply a matter of personal preference of the headline editors at the selected newspapers?

As noted in research on direct address forms in advertisements (Fairclough 1989; Kaur, Arumugam, and Yunus 2013) and newspaper discourse, such as editorials (Breeze 2015), direct address forms personalise the communication by anchoring the proposition(s) to the address. Therefore, direct address forms work as powerful devices that contribute to creating identification and framing the news story as relevant for the reader. They also establish a clear, interpersonal relationship between the journalist and the readers, making the media frame of mediated interaction explicit. In this respect, the role of the reader as consumer is accentuated.

Headlines using direct address forms are often combined with clickbait devices, such as forward-referencing (Blom and Hansen 2015). By combining forward-referencing with situational referencing, the headline effectively links the reader to the news story. Our analyses suggest that news values may be constructed in systematic ways by using direct address forms that explicitly relate the news story to the target audience, thereby creating personalisation as a news value discursively. Besides personalisation, we found that yes/no questions were used to create consonance as a news value, that claims were recurrently used to create unexpectedness and/or superlativeness, and that encouragements and instructions could be used to allude to impact and unexpectedness as news values.

In the news stories in our collection, which all cover health, journalistic authority is created in the headlines, among other things, by making claims about what the target audience knows and needs to know in order to make healthy decisions in their everyday lives. Carlson notes that journalistic texts should be understood as strategic interpretations of events and that journalists through this interpretation assert moral authority (Carlson 2017, 16). In the headlines analysed, the journalists make explicit claims and assertions about their target audience, but ones that are constructed as personalised, i.e. as possibly applying to every reader. In fact, by including direct address

forms in headlines that are constructed as invitations to identify with problems, audience knowledge claims and instructions and encouragements, journalists construct both a personalised relationship with their audience and a relationship in which the journalist works as a moral authority that knows what is best for the audience and what they should do to optimise their health. Personalisation of health stories in this way, thus, creates the journalist as an authority in an asymmetrical interpersonal relationship with the reader rather than as an authority in terms of how the journalist collects and distributes facts.

Our analysis focuses on online news stories on health in three Nordic countries. Further research is needed to establish whether direct reader address is found and works in a similar way in printed news, news on topics other than health and in countries other than the Nordic countries. It may be that personalisation of news through practices such as direct address forms is mostly found in so-called soft news stories, and it may be that the practice is mostly used in online news stories as a way to imitate participation and interaction by exploiting the affordances of relating headlines and news stories through clicking and linking.

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Table 1. Number of Headlines According to Each Newspaper

	Headlines with direct address, including directives	Total number of articles collected
Danish tabloid (<i>DT</i>)	14	37
Danish omnibus (<i>DO</i>)	24	81
Swedish tabloid (<i>ST</i>)	9	33
Swedish omnibus (<i>SO</i>)	13	41
Finnish tabloid (<i>FT</i>)	7	40
Finnish omnibus (<i>FO</i>)	4	69
Total	71	301

Table 2. Distribution of the Headlines Across Different Nordic Newspapers

	Pattern 1: Questions	Pattern 2: Claims	Pattern 3: Instructions and encouragements	Total
DK	8	6	28	42
SE	1	6	17	24
FI	4	1	7	12
Total	13	13	52	78