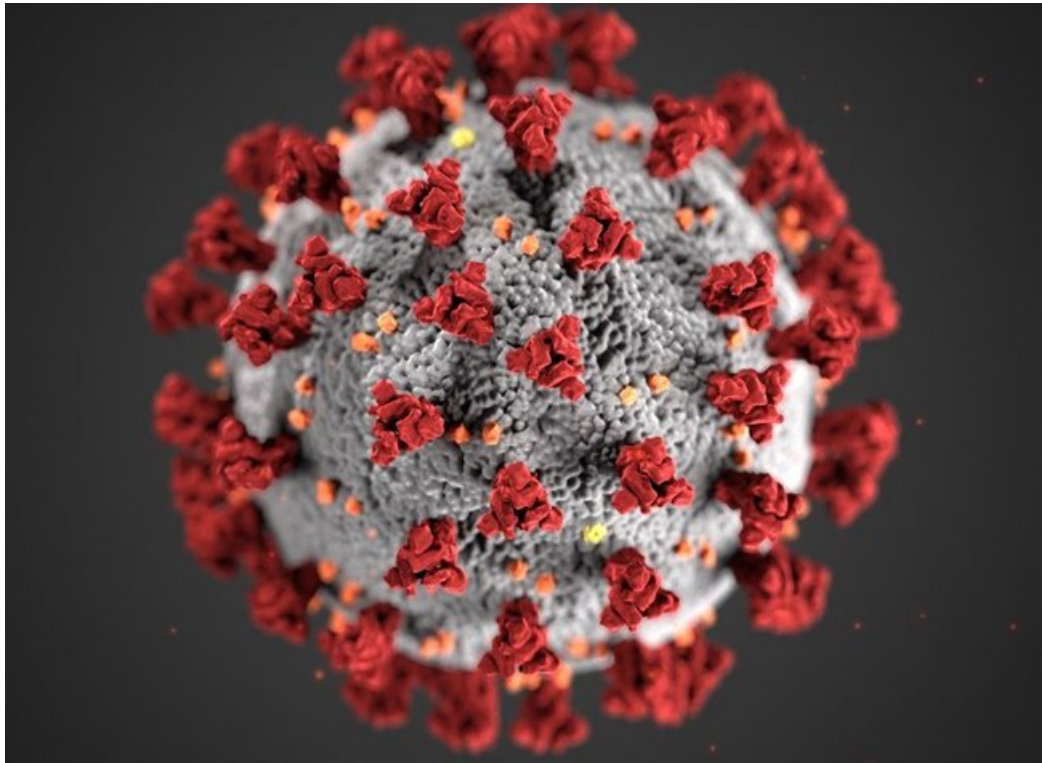


Analysing media reporting around vaccinations

More than [30% of the South African adult population has been vaccinated](#) against the Covid-19 virus.



Source: www.pexels.com

And with the daily infection rate starting to drop, suggestions are that the country has cleared the third wave. Over the last three months, local online media has certainly dedicated their share of digital column inches to articles on vaccinations. But what has the reporting been like and has it been as unbiased as many make it out to be? Media monitoring company Novus Group takes a closer look.

Almost 58,000 articles have been published mentioning vaccines in some shape or form since July. According to the Novus sentiment analysis, less than 15% of these were negative, approximately 22% were positive, and the remaining 63% were neutral.

“As government focuses on efforts to vaccinate adults across the country to achieve herd immunity by its stated target of the end of the year, people have been reading up on all aspects of the injections. Unfortunately, social media is rife with misleading, negative information resulting in many South Africans confused about how safe vaccinations are. With a strong anti-vax presence on these platforms, the onus is on traditional media to disseminate truthful information,” says Novus Group founder, Joe Hamman.

To this end, MSN South Africa, IOL, and News24 have been leading the charge in the number of articles published mentioning vaccines. With MSN being a content aggregator, it is hardly surprising that it has more than 1,100 articles on the subject with IOL (711) and News24 (378) the major local news sites focusing on vaccine-related news.

More interestingly, the most-read headlines reflect a mix of news, need for information, and health concerns. Several of the more eye-catching articles were 'How safe are Covid-19 vaccines during pregnancy?'; 'Ramaphosa: Don't spread misleading and false vaccine information'; and 'Covid-19: More than 8 million vaccinations now administered'.

"The public wants trusted content on vaccinations. With the likes of YouTube and Facebook filled with conspiracy theories and fake news, there has been a return to traditional online news sources. Now, more than ever, the media has a significant role to play in publishing content that presents the facts and equips people to make informed decisions on vaccinations. If the pandemic has highlighted anything, then it is how critical it is to have a media environment that reports on information in an unbiased manner. Our research suggests that this is happening and becoming a vital tool in combating the scourge of the Covid-19 virus," concludes Hamman.

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