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Antecedents to Information Satisfaction in Consumer Health Information Retrieval

The Internet has enabled consumers to become more proactive in managing their health by accessing information published online. Studies of this phenomenon have indicated that a large percentage of the population is now utilizing the information found on the Internet to educate themselves and to make and reinforce decisions about medications, treatments and lifestyle choices for themselves and others. This research examines the area of Consumer Health Information Retrieval as: *"a field of study that pertains to consumers' use of the Internet to locate and evaluate health related information, for the purposes of self education and collection of facts to enable informed decision making."* Prior studies on this phenomenon have largely focused around the issue of quality of the information found online, and how consumers assess the credibility and validity of the information they find. It is necessary to take a step back from the problems associated with quality of information and examine the Consumer Health Information Retrieval process, in other words we need to understand how consumers make decisions when utilizing the Internet as a resource. A research model exploring the antecedents of consumer satisfaction in online health information is proposed using IS research methodology. Factors identified in the model include relevance, quality and trust. By synthesizing related research on these constructs, their multi-dimensional nature becomes evident, allowing for the grounded development of a model that can be quantified using structural equation modeling techniques. The findings of this research allow for increased understanding of the consumer decision making processes when evaluating online health information.