



Does **Information Source Characteristic** Matter? A
Study on How Information Source Characteristic
Affects Online Health Information Behavior Under
COVID-19 Pandemic

A Presentation
for

Panel: fake news, misinformation and privacy: how
covid-19 pandemic changed our society @IRM2022

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Agenda



- Introduction, Research questions & Objectives
- Theoretical model & Hypothesis
- Methodology
- Data analysis
- Results and discussion
- Future research

Introduction

- Global COVID-19 outbreak leads to **uncertainties** and people seek **related health information** online.
- A social media platform Weibo, one of the major information resources on COVID-19 for the people in China (497 million monthly active users).
- The latest information of **COVID-19 control**, **countermeasures** and **real cases** can be found on Weibo.
- **Overwhelming information**, **misinformation** and **fake news** may lead to negative sentiment which affects people's **online information-seeking behavior** and even results in **information avoidance**.

Objectives

- Conduct an *empirical study* to model the general patterns of online health information behavior of Weibo users during the COVID-19.
- Investigate the *relationship among* source characteristic, anxiety, self-efficacy, and online health information behavior (including both information-seeking and information avoidance).
- *Propose suggestions* to make people willing to and help them effectively seek for health information online during COVID-19.

Research questions

- *How frequently* and *how much time* do Weibo users spend on seeking information about COVID-19?
- *What kind of health information* do they want about COVID-19 and what are the information resources?
- How do *information source characteristics* and *anxiety* influence Weibo users' **self-efficacy**, and then influence their *online health information behavior* (including both information-seeking and information avoidance)?

Hypothesis

H1: Perceived **information source characteristic** positively affect **self-efficacy**.

H2: Perceived **anxiety** negatively affect **self-efficacy**.

H3: Perceived **self-efficacy** positively affect **information-seeking behavior**.

H4: Perceived **self-efficacy** negatively affect **information avoidance**.

Methodology



- Quantitative method – Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)
- Data collection
 - Online Survey with coupons
- Participant
 - Social media users over 18 years old
- Sampling
 - stratified sampling of different fields of social media platform

Data analysis - descriptive characteristics

Question	Features	Number of respondents (n)	Sample distribution (%)
What kind of information do you search during COVID?(Multiple choice)			
	The latest situation of COVID-19 Infection and control in Local City	195	82%
	The latest situation of COVID-19 Infection and control in China	195	82%
What kinds of accounts do you acquire related information during COVID? (Multiple choice)			
	Authority's accounts, such as People's daily, the Xinhua News Agency, etc.	230	96%

Results and discussion

- **Social media users** represented by Weibo in China concern much about COVID-19 and **spend much time** (≥ 1 hour per day) on seeking related health information **at a relatively high frequency**.
- They prefer to **seek the latest COVID-19 information on infection symptoms and control** of **local cities** and **the state**, and **majority of them only interested in the authorities**, e.g., **the Government** and **NGOs**.

Results and discussion

- **Information source characteristic**, i.e., accuracy and trustworthiness of source information, can positively **influence social media users' Self-efficacy**, so that they believe that they can effectively understand, explain, evaluate and use the health information founded.
- High-level **Self-efficacy** can **strengthen information-seeking behavior** on COVID-19 pandemic related information and **tends to prevent or delay the acquisition of available but potentially unwanted information** (e.g., fake news and misinformation).

Recommendation

- As majority of Weibo users believe in information disseminated by the authorities on Social Media. Thus, **the government should better use this platform to disseminate accurate, trustworthy and useful information to prevent COVID-19**, e.g. taking vaccinations, wearing mask and enforcing social distancing.
- The government, NGOs and associated institutions can utilize the social media platform to **interact with Weibo users with activities, (e.g. Webinars, Workshops and Newsletters)** such as providing guidance and knowledge on acquiring and using health information **for better protecting the citizen.**

Future research



- Collect more data to **perform multi-group analysis**.
- **Compare** the results **with other popular social media/community**.