

THE EFFECTS OF KNOWLEDGE ON THE LEVEL OF EXTERNAL INFORMATION SEARCH

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript presents an argument for the need to explicitly measure the passive component of external information search. Scale development for passive information search is proposed. Propositions are developed looking at the relationships of objective knowledge and self-assesses (subjective) knowledge with active and passive information search.

Consumer knowledge is a vital component of the consumer decision making process (Brucks 1985) and knowledge has a significant effect on the amount of external information search which will take place. The current understanding of external information search under-represents the passive portion of external information search (Beatty and Smith 1987). In fact, many researchers have shown that very little external search is conducted even for major purchases (e.g., Claxton, Fry, and Portis 1974; Furse, Punj, and Stewart 1984; Newman 1977). It is proposed that this is an example of under representing the amount of information search, rather than a lack of search--the passive portion of information search is simply not measured.

Objective knowledge is the actual knowledge individuals have, while self-assessed knowledge is the knowledge individuals believe they have (Beatty and Smith 1987). The relationships between knowledge (objective and self-assessed) and information search (active

and passive) are proposed to be mediated by the ability to search and the motivation to search.

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