

A Structural Equation Modeling Approach to Examine the Relationships between College Students' Online Information Search Behaviors and Their Internet-Specific Epistemological Beliefs

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This main purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between college students' online information search behaviors and their Internet-specific epistemological beliefs by using structural equation modeling (SEM) method. 301 Taiwanese undergraduates volunteered to participate in this study and their responses were assessed quantitatively via two instruments, the Information Search Behavior Survey (ISBS) and the Internet-Specific Epistemological Questionnaire (ISEQ). The ISBS consisted of three aspects and each had two possible orientations: the standards for correctness (Multiple Sources & Authority), the standards for usefulness (Content & Technical), and the searching strategy (Elaboration & Match). The ISEQ addressing the individuals' thinking about knowledge and knowing comprised four dimensions in two categories: nature of knowledge (Certainty and Simplicity), nature of knowing (Source and Justification). The two-stage SEM approach was conducted to examine the hypothesis of theory-derived casual model established between college students' online information search behaviors and their Internet-specific epistemological beliefs. The confirmatory factor analyses results of the measurement models indicated that there were acceptable reliability and validity in these two questionnaires. Moreover, the fit indices in the structural model revealed that students with the more sophisticated Internet-specific epistemological beliefs might adopt a less naive judging standard and searching strategy when facing information on the Internet.