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Analysis of influencing factors of patients' online doctor selection behavior from the dual-path perspective --Take good doctor psychiatry as an example

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Abstract: Clarifying the influencing factors of patient users' medical choice behavior is the key to improving patient users' online medical experience. Taking Haodafu psychiatric patients as the research object, based on the perspective of ELM-SOR theory,a model of influencing factors of patient users' online medical choice behavior is constructed, and a combination of structural equation model and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis is used method for analysis. The results show that: ①The medical choice behavior of patients in online health community is affected by the information quality of the central route, the reputation and credibility of the peripheral route and other factors, this process will also be regulated by the patient's user involvement and consultation price.②Qualitative comparative analysis of fuzzy sets found four antecedent configurations that trigger the transformation of online medical choice behavior. The findings provide recommendations for optimizing the online consultation experience.

Keywords: online health community, selection of a physician by users, binary pathways, ELM-SOR, User involvement

1.   INTRODUCTION

Online Health Community (OHC) is a new type of Internet medical model, the models constructed by current research on the influencing factors of patients' health information behavior are often based on only a single dimension, however, according to the ELM theory[1], the different motivations and abilities of patients in the process of choosing a doctor will cause their information processing to be affected by two different paths, the edge and the center. On the other hand, the previous empirical research on the conditional combination of influencing factors is less. In light of these gaps and concerns, this paper studies the influence of different path factors on medical choice behavior from the perspective of information processing.Our research questions are: what are the influencing factors that significantly affect online medical choice behavior, what are the differences between different paths, whether there is a moderating effect, and what combination of factors can drive the online medical choice behavior transformation on this basis.

2.   THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND HYPOTHESES

ELM theory (Elaboration Likelihood Model, ELM) believes that changes in user attitudes can be processed through two information processing modes: one is central processing, which requires users to analyze the logic and relevance of information with critical thinking, such as information quality[2];the other is edge processing, which mainly achieves trust through peripheral information related to the task, such as source credibility[3];at the same time, the mode of information processing selected by different users is regulated by the degree of user involvement. SOR theory (Stimulus-Organism-Response, SOR) indicates that product attribute characteristics or service quality as a stimulus (S) factor will affect the user's perceived identity and emotional change as an organism (O), thereby promoting the occurrence of a certain behavior (R)of the user[4].

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Therefore, based on the ELM-SOR theory, the quality of trust source information is selected as the central path factor, the doctor's credibility is selected as the marginal path factor, the perceived value is used as the mediating factor, and the user involvement and consultation price are used as adjustment factors, in order to construct a dual-path model of influencing factors of patients' online medical choice behavior.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This paper obtains doctor-patient data from the psychiatry department of the "Good Doctor" website, the largest online health community in China. In terms of research methods, a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis was used to analyze the research questions in stages: ①The factors that significantly affect the online medical choice behavior were examined by structural equation modeling (SEM). ②On the basis of the SEM test results, the fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) is used to reveal how the combination of significant influencing factors further drives the transformation of online medical choice behavior from the perspective of configuration.

From the results, the SEM model test found that the assumptions about the interaction quality, content quality, reputation credibility, perceived value, and consultation price of the central path passed the test, and the user involvement degree (0.206) had a significant impact on the relationship between central path factors and perceived value.Secondly, the fsQCA configuration analysis found four equivalent configurations that contributed to the transformation of online medical choice behavior.

4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

All of these findings are of great significance both in theory and in practice. Theoretically, first, based on the ELM-SOR theory, this paper examines the individual effects of factors and the combination effect in the overall relationship, the moderating effect of the patient's user involvement on the dual path was also discussed, so the influence mechanism of the whole process of online medical choice behavior was deeply analyzed. From the perspective of management practice, this study provides optimization suggestions for the development of online health consultation before, during and after consultation. In the future, a variety of online health community psychiatry data will be expanded to further validate and clarify the conclusions of this study.

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