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Yanyan Shang

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Improving Health Literacy: Health Knowledge Transfer in Social Media Platforms

Yanyan Shang
The University of Tampa
yshang@ut.edu

Yousra Harb
Yarmouk University
yousra.harb@yu.edu.jo

ABSTRACT

Health literacy plays a key role in the quality of healthcare due to its knowledge-intensive nature. This is because a high level of health literacy enhances patients' understanding of health conditions and their ability to follow instructions and cope with treatments. This study aims at understanding the factors that impact the effectiveness of health knowledge transfer in online health-related social media platforms. The findings can be used as guidelines for the development and management of online health-related social media platforms to improve user experience. It can also provide a means to enhance healthcare information dissemination and healthcare education, as well as facilitate a wide range of interactions between patients and the healthcare delivery system.

Keywords

Health literacy, knowledge transfer, social media platforms

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The past decade has witnessed rapidly developed and tremendous growth in health-related social media services, such as online consultation services, patient blogs, social network sites, and online communities (Shang & Liu, 2015; Shang 2019). One of the most important reasons is that Internet-based healthcare services can be used by both healthcare providers and receivers for information dissemination/acquisition and/or knowledge exchange (Liu, Zhang, Li, & Deng, 2013). According to NCHS data brief No. 66 (Cohen & Adams), 61% of American adults have looked for health or medical information on the Internet, and the number is increasing every year. Internet-based healthcare services appear to be a means for healthcare information dissemination, health literacy education, and physician-patient communication. Especially, when more and more healthcare providers realized patients are central to healthcare delivery (Rozenblum and Bates, 2013), the using of online health-related social media platforms becomes an important channel for improving the quality of healthcare. This study aims at understanding the factors that impact the effectiveness of health knowledge transfer in online health-related social media platforms. We attempt to answer the following research question: what are the factors that impact the effectiveness of health knowledge transfer in online health-related social media platforms? To do so, we will first identify the factors that may affect the knowledge transfer in online health-related social media platforms; then, we will formalize and test hypotheses regarding factors that impact the effectiveness of knowledge transfer in online health-related social media platforms; and finally, we will provide suggestions on improving public health literacy through the online health-related social media platforms.

This study is built upon previous theories: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Capital and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), and the knowledge-based view of the competitive advantage. We formalized several hypotheses and the measurements for each construct were adapted from previous studies. The data will be collected through a web-based survey. We will analyze the data using SmartPLS. Findings and discussions will be provided based on the data analysis results.

As a knowledge-intensive domain, the quality of healthcare services depends not only on the healthcare provider but also on the health literacy of the care receiver. In order to provide better care, healthcare providers are struggling with public health education. This study suggests a model that helps to understand the knowledge transfer process. It will not only help healthcare providers manage the Internet-based service channel but also benefit offline face-to-face service by providing a means of health literacy.

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