

Investigating Information Seekers' Selection of Interpersonal and Impersonal Sources



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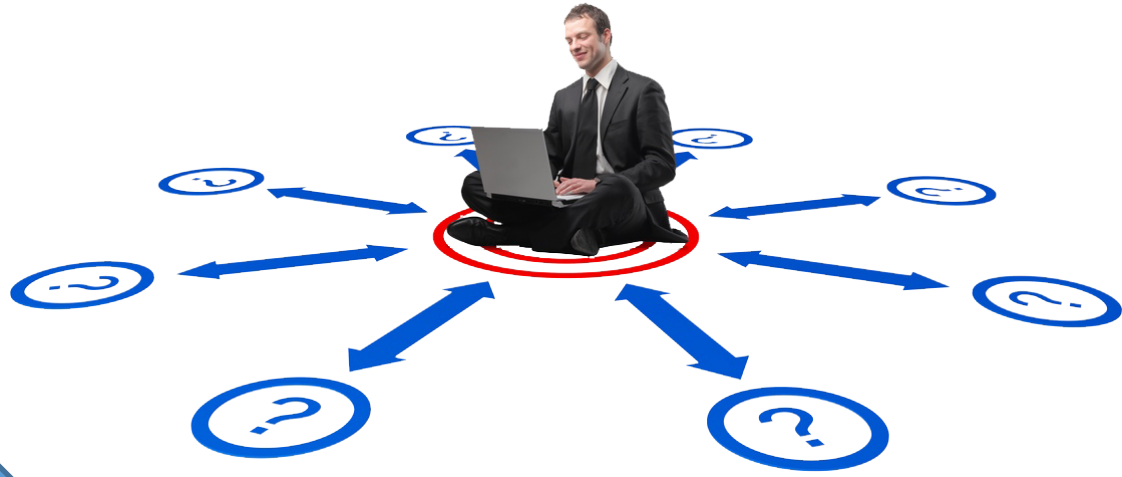
Objectives

- Obtaining an in-depth understanding of how and why individuals pick and utilize impersonal and interpersonal information sources differently.
- Going beyond heavy information users (e.g., academic users) and professional contexts.
- Comparing online and offline information seeking.

Study Design



53 participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk



Four information seeking tasks (two controversial topics + two everyday life tasks)

- Consulting at least three different sources for each task
- Finishing in two days



23 semi-structured follow-up interviews via GoToMeeting



Writing about information seeking experiences in an online logbook

Acknowledgements



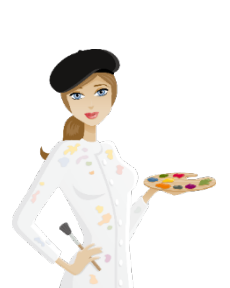
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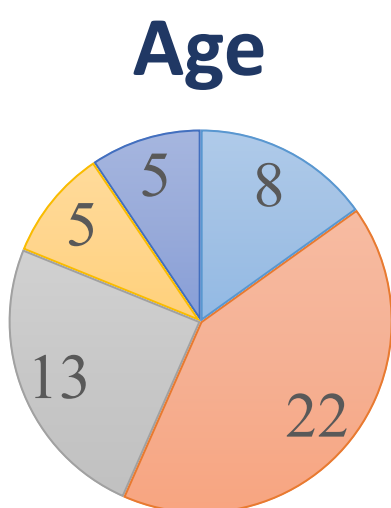
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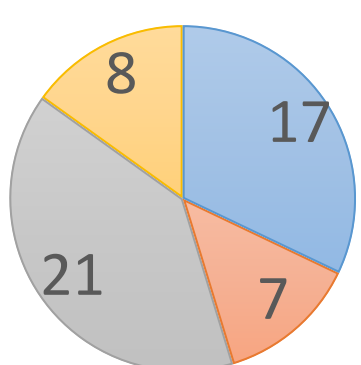
Participants



Education
n



18-25 26-35
36-45 46-55
55+



High School
Associate
Bachelor
Graduate

Data Analysis

- The logbook data yielded 636 information seeking episodes.
- Focuses of the coding:
 - Sources and channels employed by participants (Agarwal's classification of source/channel types);
 - Barriers in information seeking (using a coding scheme compiled in our previous work);
 - Contextual factors that shaped seeking behavior (Wilson's second model of information seeking behavior).

Results and Discussion

Frequencies of Types of Sources/Channels Used

	Search Engines	Professional Websites (e.g., Kelley Blue Book)	Pre-posted Entries in Forums, Q&A sites, etc.	Phone	Face to Face	Posting on Online Forums, SNS
T1	80	124	10	14	7	11
T2	78	110	6	0	2	4
T3	73	108	2	8	3	10
T4	49	121	1	1	0	4



- Impersonal sources (e.g., websites, newspaper) are mostly readily available but not personalized.
- Under strict time constraints, individuals may prefer impersonal online sources.



- Interpersonal sources had a better understanding of the context of a seeker's question, however this knowledge could also be a barrier.
- Questioning interpersonal sources about controversial topics could generate emotional reactions.