

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHINESE ELECTRONICS ENGINEERS' SELECTION OF INFORMATION SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies show that engineers prefer some information sources over others when they seek information for their work. Oral discussion, print textbooks, print handbooks and standards, online bibliographic databases, and print professional journals are among the top information sources engineers use. A number of factors, e.g., accessibility, ease of use and quality, have been found to be potential factors influencing engineers' information source use patterns.

However, previous studies are largely West-centered, and conducted in the pre-Internet age. This study endeavors to discover the information source use patterns of Chinese electronics engineers, and identify factors that influence their selection of information sources. An online survey has been conducted among the engineering subscribers of a Chinese magazine in the electronics industry. Descriptive statistics, correlations and factor analysis are employed for data analysis.

The online survey generated 1,164 usable valid responses. Results show that subjects in this study prefer online information sources over traditional ones. Vertical websites seem to be taking the place of traditional periodicals. In addition, Chinese subjects do not favor discussion as their Western peers do; they prefer non-human information sources better than inter-personal communication.

Subjects' selection of information sources are correlated with a number of elements, but at most moderately. Factor analysis demonstrates that EASE is the only noticeable principal component affecting subjects' use of information sources. The effect of QUALITY is merely detectable.