

The Influence of Risk Perception Regarding Tobacco on Consumer Information Search and Intention to Purchase Tobacco

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to use the risk information seeking and processing model and to investigate the effect of consumers' risk perception of harmful ingredients in tobacco on information search and purchase intention. The research results were as follows. Risk perception had a negative effect on the insufficiency of information, which is not expected to feel insufficient information even though they know that tobacco is dangerous due to the addiction of tobacco. Risk perception had a positive effect on the seeking information and did not affect avoiding information. Insufficient information had a negative effect on both seeking information and avoiding information, which is why an appropriate degree of insufficiency of information is effective in reducing information avoidance, but excessive insufficiency of information rather reduces the pursuit of information. It was found that the pursuit of information had a negative effect on the purchase intention of tobacco, and information avoidance had a positive effect on the purchase intention of tobacco. Therefore, consumers should contact information frequently in their daily lives. The moderating effect of perceived information gathering capacity was significant only in the group with high perceived information gathering capacity. It was found that the higher the confidence in obtaining and using information, the lower the attitude toward seeking information even if the information felt insufficient.

Key words: consumer information, risk perception, information exploration, purchase intention, tobacco

I. Introduction

Recently, a law was enacted to disclose information by analyzing the types and contents of harmful ingredients in tobacco. It aims to guarantee the people's right to know and protect the health of the people from the harmfulness of tobacco. In order to increase the effectiveness of the law, consumers must pursue information on harmful ingredients in tobacco and not avoid information. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to use the risk information seeking and processing model and to investigate the effect of consumers' risk perception of harmful ingredients in tobacco on information search and purchase intention.

II. Research Method

1. Research Questions

This study aims to understand the process of risk communication related to tobacco by examining how smokers' perception of tobacco risk affects information insufficiency, information seeking, and the intention to purchase tobacco, as well as the moderating effect of perceived information-gathering ability. Before this, we aim to explore whether there are differences in the variables of the Risk Information Seeking and Processing (RISP) model based on the characteristics of the respondents. Therefore, we have set the following three research questions:

1. Investigate differences in the variables of the RISP model based on respondent characteristics.
2. Partially apply and verify the RISP model for harmful components of tobacco.
3. Verify the moderating effect of perceived information-gathering ability.

2. Survey

This study used a convenience sample of 500 adult smokers. The survey was conducted by the professional survey agency Macromill Embrain Co., Ltd. over a total of four days, from March 22 to March 25, 2024, using an online questionnaire.

3. Analysis

This study conducted statistical analyses using SPSS 26 and AMOS 20 to test the hypotheses with the 500 valid samples obtained.

III. Result

The main findings of the study are as follows:

1. **Risk Perception of Harmful Components in Tobacco:** The average risk perception of the harmful components in tobacco among respondents was 3.789, indicating a relatively high level of awareness.
2. **Information Insufficiency:** The analysis of information insufficiency revealed that women reported higher levels of information insufficiency compared to men. Additionally, lower educational levels were associated with higher information insufficiency.
3. **Perceived Information-Gathering Ability:** The examination of perceived information-gathering ability showed that men had higher perceived information-gathering ability than women.
4. **Attitude Towards Information Seeking:** The analysis of respondents' attitudes towards information seeking indicated that men had a higher tendency to seek information compared to women. The moderating effect of perceived information-gathering ability was also confirmed.

IV. Conclusions

This study is significant in revealing that consumers undergo a concurrent process of information seeking and information avoidance, supported by Ihye-Gyu and Baek Hye-Jin (2019), and Kahlor et al. (2006). In this regard, the findings of this study raise concerns that the disclosure of harmful components in tobacco might not lead to increased awareness and smoking cessation. Instead, it may guide consumers towards cigarettes with lower harmful component levels, potentially diminishing the intention to quit smoking.

Moreover, it is crucial to continuously monitor not only the types and components of new tobacco products entering the domestic market but also the domestic tobacco market itself, tobacco companies, reasons for smoking among smokers, and smoking prevention among non-smokers. Additionally, policies from other countries that are part of the Framework Convention

on Tobacco Control should be considered and potentially applied.

References

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