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# Seeking Complex Health Services in the Age of Self-referral

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between consumers' information search and service satisfaction, specifically focused on the search for mental health professionals. The selection of a mental health provider is of interest because practitioners work from a highly diverse set of theoretical bases, may hold a wide range of different credentials and provide drastically different therapeutic approaches, therefore making the selection complex and difficult for consumers to self-navigate. Data sampling from patients of mental health suggest that consumers selecting a provider based on self-performed searches, rather than receiving external input (referrals from physicians, relatives, or friends), report lower satisfaction with their mental health provider. The results reveal the importance of understanding the consumer search, particularly the use of the internet as a search tool.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Lindsay R.L. Larson serves as Assistant Professor of Marketing for Georgia Southern University's College of Business. She received her Ph.D. from Yale University in Social Psychology, and a post-doctoral certificate in Marketing from the University of Florida's Hough Graduate School of Business.

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