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When Browsing Gets Cluttered: Exploring and Modeling Interactions of Browsing Clutter, Browsing Habits, and Coping

Empirical research on browsing clutter

- Browsing clutter refers to the information overload-associated experiences during web browsing.
- We conducted two empirical user studies to understand how users experience browsing clutter.
- Browsing clutter has four forms: 1) the amount of tabs and windows, 2) content of the web pages and interactive elements, 3) navigation, and 4) search process.
- We modeled how users' browsing habits and coping strategies influence browsing clutter.

Study 1: Interview (N=16)

We interviewed users to investigate how users experience clutter, how they use browsers, and how they deal with the challenges they face while browsing.
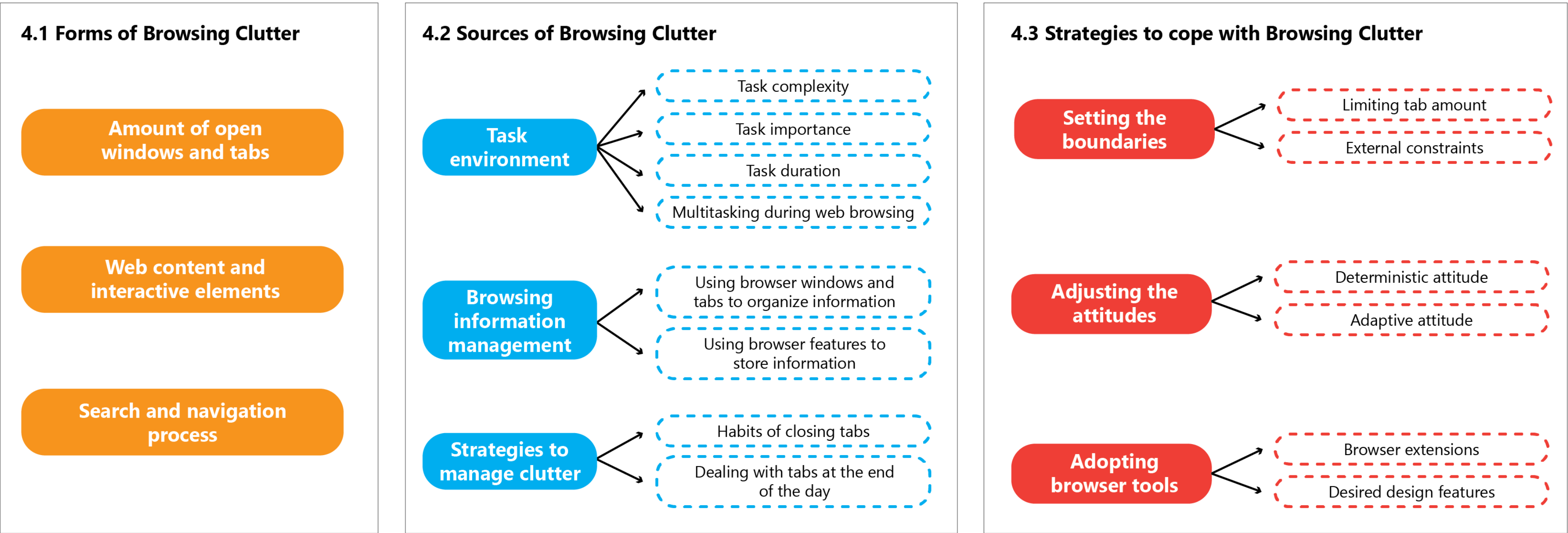
Study 2: Online survey (N=400)

Based on users' survey answers, we modeled browsing clutter, browsing behaviors, coping strategies, and their interactions.
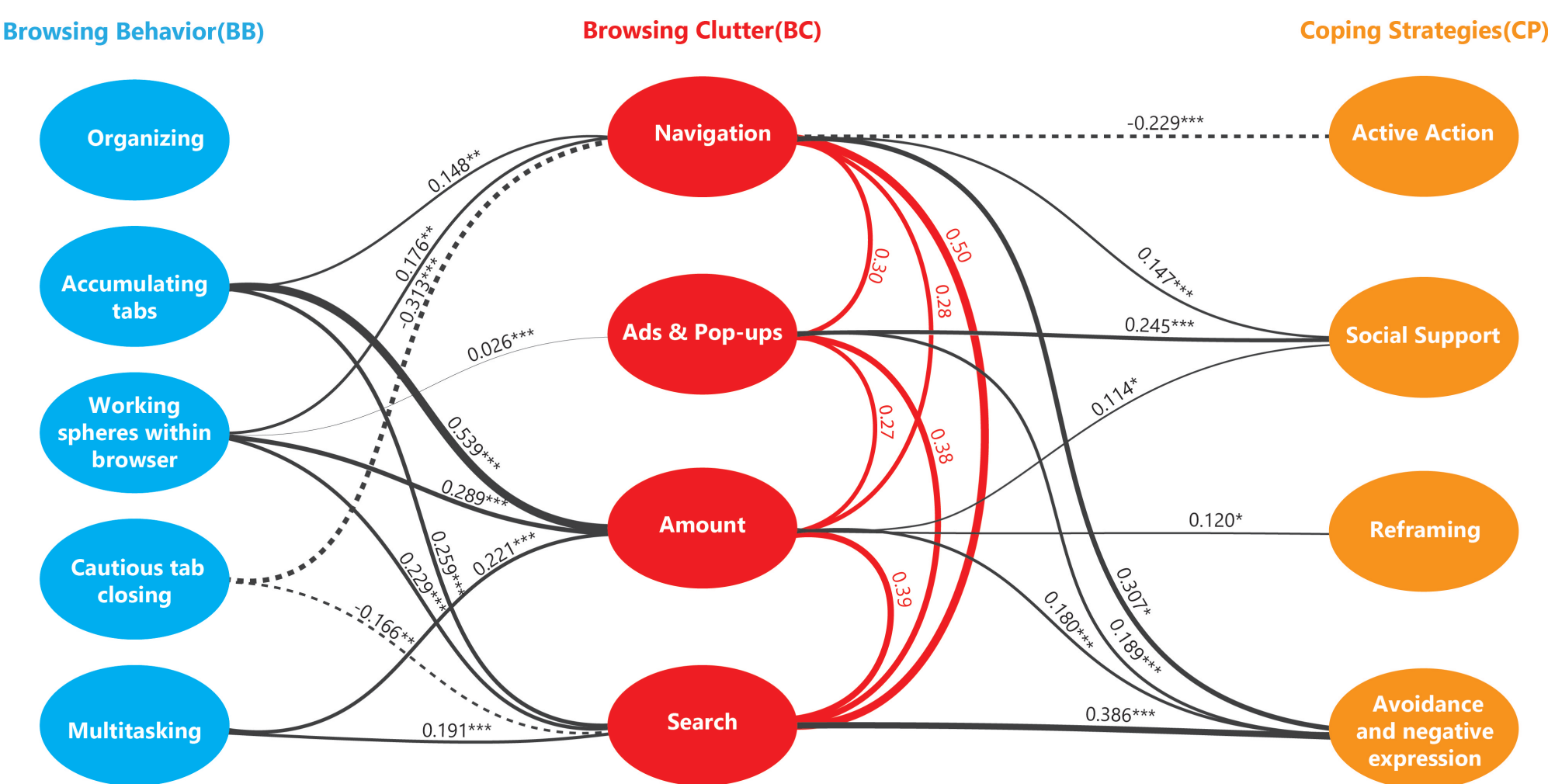
Discussion

Our studies provide insight into how users experience clutter through a comprehensive view, highlighting different forms of browsing clutter. Browsing clutter is influenced by many factors including users' browsing behaviors, task attributes, and the coping strategies the user applies. Based on the survey results, around 25% of our respondents considered browsing clutter as a serious problem for themselves, while for 18% it was not a problem. Our results highlight how browser users adapt to the clutter, while it remains a problem of different degrees to them. Many browsing habits increase the likelihood of browsing clutter, which indicates that the users could reduce the clutter by changing their habits.