Marketing Research Seminar Series | Department of Marketing | WU Vienna

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''Catching their eyes: context-driven information acquisition on search engines"

ABSTRACT: The multi-billion dollar search engine marketing industry is all about gaining businesses' visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs). On a micro level, listing's ability to attract visual attention is determined by how consumers view SERPs, hence, is context specific. The paper develops a model that describes this visual inspection process by incorporating two core elements: consumers' decisions of whether to scroll to bring additional listings into view (sub-screen choice) and what listings to inspect. The results show that the distance between sub-screens, the scrolling direction, the time and percentage of listings viewed on the sub-screen drive consumers' scrolling decision. Intrinsic preference and low-level features are predictive for the attention shifts among listings at the early stages; yet their impact is surpassed by semantic information as inspection progresses: specifically, transactional content invites attention while descriptive content discourages further inspection. The proposed method help managers to create "visibility maps" of SERPs, which could be used to identify visual competitors, assess location performance, and diagnose problems in rank-bidding strategy.