

Department of Marketing



Research Seminars Series

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Beyond What Is Said: Using Language Model Agents to Find Presentation Effects in Written Content

Abstract: Written content plays a key role in how firms and consumers communicate, yet most research examines the substance of a message rather than its presentation. Nonverbal features of written text, such as layout, organization, and visual emphasis, remain largely unexplored. These features resist large-scale measurement because their meaning shifts across settings, they are hard to specify in advance, and standard text-cleaning steps often strip them out. To study how such presentation features influence consumer responses, we introduce an automated approach that treats the hidden layers of language models as a data source. The approach isolates a compact set of human-readable signals from these hidden layers, links them to outcomes of interest through predictive modeling, and uses a team of AI agents to label what each signal captures. Applied to a large set of online consumer evaluations, the approach reveals many presentation features tied to how useful readers find the content. We then examine two features related to how content is organized and show experimentally that they increase perceived usefulness, because they make the text easier to read and understand. The work broadens our view of how written presentation matters and surfaces features that existing tools tend to miss.