

MARKETING COLLOQUIA

SPRING 2015

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Where: 741 JMHH

When: 3:00 PM to 4:20 PM

THE PATH TO CLICK: ARE YOU ON IT?

ABSTRACT: The authors investigate the information search process that consumers engage in when visually inspecting search engine result pages (SERPs). Eye-tracking data are collected and matched with the textual content of the SERPs (i.e., listings presented on the page). A hidden Markov model of listing inspection choice and gaze duration is developed to capture the latent information processing states during the dynamic inspection process. Consumers switch between two hidden states, namely, the global-exploration state and the local-evaluation state. Eye fixation location, percentage of listing viewed and cumulative duration on the current screen drive the scrolling decision more in the former state compared to the latter state. The impact exerted by section preference, low-level stimuli, and transactional (price, promotion, store) and descriptive (attribute, quality) information also differs across these latent states. Two sets of simulations demonstrate the influence of semantic environment on the inspection probabilities of a target listing. The paper offers insights into the content design and optimal rank selection on SERPs with respect to the content and location of listings from competitors.