

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

FROM INTEREST TO INTENT: THE DUAL ROLE OF AI-GENERATED IMAGES IN PROPERTY SEARCH DECISION-MAKING

By

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Date : 25 Nov 2025 (Tue)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : Y304, PolyU

Abstract

This study investigates how Artificial Intelligence (AI)-generated design images influence consumer evaluation of unfinished (shell) properties, which typically face presentation challenges due to their lack of visual appeal. Drawing on processing fluency theory, we propose that using AI-generated images increases consumer interest by providing enhanced visual references, but does not necessarily translate into higher purchase intention because of cognitive dissonance, that is, potential inconsistencies between AI-generated symbolic information and consumers' real-life experiences. We further propose that the design space and creative freedom granted to the AI model moderate these effects. Using a large-scale randomized field experiment on an online real estate platform and two online experiments, we find that AI-generated images significantly increase initial interest. However, their impact on purchase intention depends on the size of the design space and level of creative freedom – smaller design spaces and lower creative freedom enhance purchase intention, while larger design spaces and higher creative freedom lead to weaker or even negative effects. This research contributes to the literature on generative AI applications in marketing and product presentation by highlighting how AI's symbolic information generation and its design parameters shape consumer decision-making. Our findings provide practical guidelines for the effective implementation of AI-generated imagery in property marketing.

Prof. Cheng Yi is an associate professor at the School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University, China. She received her Ph.D. in information systems from National University of Singapore. Her research interests include human computer interaction, electronic commerce, online consumer behavior and digital learning. Her work has appeared in journals such as *Information Systems Research*, *Management Science*, *MIS Quarterly*, *Production and Operations Management*, and *Journal of Management Information Systems*. She currently serves as an Associate Editor for *MIS Quarterly*.

All interested are welcome.



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