The Department of
Info Systems & Cyber Security

PRESENTS:
AT&T Distinguished Lecture Series
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“Truth Bias and Veracity Effect in Online Word-of-Mouth”

Abstract: This paper explores how consumers detect real and fake reviews in online word-of-mouth. Drawing on the truth-default theory that emerged from the lie detection literature in the recent decade, we propose that consumers have a general tendency to believe a review to be true more than fake (i.e., the truth bias), and that this tendency is greater for negative reviews than positive reviews. In addition, we propose a veracity effect—consumers are more accurate in detecting real reviews than detecting fake reviews—and that this effect is also greater for negative reviews than positive reviews. To test these hypotheses, we conducted three controlled experiments where participants were informed about the number of true and fake reviews, and then asked to classify each review as real or fake. These studies provided converging evidence for the aforementioned effects and demonstrated the importance of review valence in consumers’ judgment of review veracity. Among the first to explore fake review detection from consumers’ perspective, this paper investigates the overall ability of consumers to detect real and fake reviews, documents the pervasiveness of truth bias and veracity effect, and uncovers the unique role of valence in consumers’ veracity judgments. Our findings also offer important practical implications for consumers and review platforms.

Short Bio: Dr. Han Zhang is a Full Professor of Information Technology Management (ITM) and Steven A. Denning Professor of Technology & Management at the Scheller College of Business, Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). He received his Ph.D. in Information Systems from the University of Texas at Austin. He currently serves as the Faculty Director of the Denning Technology & Management (T&M) Program. He was the ITM Area Coordinator from 2007 to 2012, and he served as the Faculty Director of the Executive MBA Program from 2013 to 2016. Dr. Zhang held the Helen and John Taylor Rhett, Jr. Term Professorship from 2008 to 2012. His research focuses on the economics of information technology, online trust and reputation, online word-of-mouth, and the evolution of electronic markets. His research work on the institutional setup to help small businesses grow in the digital economy has been used as the basis for testimony before the Congressional House Committee on Small Business. He has published in MIS Quarterly, Information Systems Research, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Management Information Systems, Journal of the Association for Information Systems, and other academic journals. Dr. Zhang was a co-founder of the China Summer Workshop on Information Management (CSWIM) in 2007, and he served as the workshop Co-Chair of CSWIM 2007 and CSWIM 2010. He was the Program Co-Chair of the Sixth Workshop on e-Business (WeB) in 2007 and in 2016 – 2020 as well as the Program Co-Chair of the 14th Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems (PACIS) in 2010. He served as an associate editor for MIS Quarterly from January 2018 to December 2020, and he currently serves as a senior editor for MIS Quarterly. He is also a senior editor for the Journal of Information Systems and E-Business Management and Information & Management. Moreover, he serves on the editorial boards of Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce and Pacific Asia Journal of the Association for Information Systems. Dr. Zhang was a 2009 Hesburgh Award Teaching Fellow at Georgia Tech. He received the 2009 Georgia Tech Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor Award and the 2010 Brady Family Award for Faculty Teaching Excellence at Scheller College of Business, Georgia Tech. He received Georgia Tech Steven A. Denning Faculty Award for Global Engagement in 2018.

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