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Selective Attention in Viewing Webpages: The Effects of Perceptual Saliency and Content Relevance on Attention and Memory

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ABSTRACT

It is well acknowledged that viewers' attention is a scarce resource on the web so that it is of great importance to figure out the factors in determining attention allocation when Internet users are viewing webpages. Current study addresses above question by reviewing prior literature on selective attention and proposing a research model, which emphasizes the roles of perceptual saliency and perceived relevance of a visual object in catching and holding viewers'

attention as well as in increasing their memory of the visual object. In addition, our research takes a prevalent online information presentation format into consideration, i.e., a visual object that integrates both pictorial and textual information. We discuss the different roles of pictures and texts in affecting viewers' attention. A lab experiment is designed to test our hypotheses and we use eye-tracker to record viewers' attention. We conclude our work by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of this study.