Abstract:
Prior studies have shown that popularity information has a great impact on an individual’s search or choice process. However, one thing that has been largely overlooked in this literature is the influence of position. The effect of popularity could be potentially overestimated if we do not account for position. In this paper, we try to fill in the gap in literature through conducting laboratory experiments. Our results suggest that compared with a situation where no popularity information is presented, people tend to search in a more strictly sequential way when popularity information is aligned with position and search in a more loosely sequential way when popularity is not aligned with position. When examining the relative influence of popularity and position, we find that position effect has a stronger impact than popularity effect for the search stage. However, neither popularity nor position has an effect on consumer choice decision conditional on the search. Our study is among the first to understand the interplay between popularity and position effect, and their relative impact on the consumer’s two-stage decision process. We discuss implications for theory and practice.

Bio:
Jenny is a PhD candidate in Information Systems at the Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University. She completed her master degree in Information Systems at the University of Maryland, and Bachelor of Business Administration at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China. Her research mainly focuses on examining the impact of social signals on consumer behavior and the digitization of traditional business models.