

HOW USING AI SUPPRESSES CONSUMER DISCLOSURE AND WORD OF MOUTH

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Abstract

Consumers are increasingly integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into their daily decision-making, yet far less is known about what happens after they adopt AI. Across 20 studies (N=6,865), we examine how consumers communicate their AI use and find a striking pattern: people are consistently less willing to disclose that they relied on AI, compared to when they receive help from humans. This reduced transparency and word of mouth is not driven by distrust in AI, lack of familiarity, or diminished psychological ownership. Instead, it stems largely from anticipated social judgment—concerns about how others may perceive their competence, effort, or authenticity when AI assistance is involved. Notably, this communication reluctance persists even when consumers trust AI more or prefer its output over human input. These findings reveal important challenges for companies promoting AI services and for policymakers seeking to encourage responsible, open AI use.

Track: Consumer Behaviour