




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## Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words? The Use of Non-Text Items in Information Systems Research

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### Abstract

The use of non-text items (graphs, graphics and tables) is firmly established in the publishing tradition of information systems research. Non-text images are used to convey complex information in a pictorial or diagrammatic sense, adding additional meaning to the discussion. Non-text images also highlight results, and meaningfully represent both quantitative and qualitative data.

This paper examines the use of non-text items in information systems journals. Three measures of use are employed: rate of use of non-text items; academic and practitioner journal usage of non-text items; and citation rates of articles with varying levels of non-text items. The sample research articles represent a 30- year timeframe and include articles from six prominent information systems journals. The research results show an increasing use of non-text items in information systems research. In addition, articles that utilise a higher rate of non-text items were more likely to be cited in other works. Practitioner journals were found to utilise more non-text items than academic journals, and to utilise a different mixture of non-text items.

It would appear that articles that use higher levels of non text items are more widely cited, so if citedness is the definition of 'success', then it may be practical to incorporate a range of non-text items. If consideration is given to the motive behind selection of articles for citation when preparing research, it seems possible that increased use of non-text items improves the clarity of research findings, leading to their increased usage, uptake and citation levels.



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