

Chapter 4

AI–Driven Media Influence on Consumer Behavior: Algorithmic Personalization, Trust, and Attention

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ABSTRACT

The present chapter considers how artificial intelligence (AI) uses algorithmic personalisation, trust mechanisms, and attention capture to influence consumer behaviour. It outlines the development of recommendation systems using AI such as deep learning and reinforcement learning, explaining how they personalise content and predict preferences to influence decisions. One of the observed changes in the AI approach occurs through rise of “thinking” with predict preferences and “feeling” with simulating empathy for uninterrupted conversations. It also defines “filter bubbles” for another impact of recommendation engines, search filters, and chatbots with their personalised experiences by predicted preferences, so that users could only face with similar and “relevant” options during their journey. Higher engagement could manipulate a user's preference through the given predictions and direct the user to complete a purchase even at higher prices.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a move toward media consumption mediated by AI. Artificial intelligence (AI) is taking an increasingly active place in forming what people see and how they engage, affecting the decisions they make. Media systems therefore change from mass broadcasting mass of undifferentiated content to curated streams generated by AI to adjust content flows adapted to individual behaviour. Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) describe the change as the rise of “thinking” AI where recommendation systems predict preferences and “feeling” AI such as chatbots simulating empathy for continuing engagement. The forms dominate contemporary media platforms such as Netflix and TikTok.

The technology changes have modified business logics, Zuboff (2019) outlining how platforms monetise the behavioural data users generate alongside content they distribute. Platforms extract data to predict and influence future actions, often leaving users unaware of AI’s influence over their engagement. The economic model treats attention as a resource to be mined.

Empirical research illustrates such dynamics, with Kang and Lou (2022) showing that TikTok users rely on “For You” feeds generated by AI to an extent leading users to report time distortion and habitual scrolling. Some users attempt to “train” the algorithm to regain control, yet machine agency is dominant. Liang (2022) shows how TikTok’s Chinese counterpart Douyin organises attention based on algorithmic tags instead of social networks. Douyin’s 600 million daily users exemplify how “algorithmic capitalism” lead to vast audiences and revenues being channelled through systems made to capture and monetise users’ attention.

In this line, the key concepts to consider in this chapter should be introduced briefly. First of all, Kaplan and Haenlein (2019) distinguish mechanical, thinking, and feeling AI, out of which thinking and feeling systems are most relevant in media contexts. Recommendation engines, search filters, and chatbots personalise experiences by predicting preferences or simulating responsiveness.

The process depends on algorithmic personalisation, Pariser (2011) warning that personalisation narrows informational exposure and creates “filter bubbles” in which users encounter only what algorithms predict they will like. Gillespie (2014) notes that algorithms embed cultural and economic priorities into what is deemed “relevant” as they sort content, advantaging advertising goals at the expense of diversity. Such systems increase engagement and convenience, yet Mohsin (2024) shows them to do so by manipulating preferences and pushing consumers toward purchases at higher prices or which are not necessary to them, significantly affecting satisfaction and loyalty. Yeung (2017) discusses personalisation evolved into “hyper nudging” (continuous digital environment adjustment using AI) with live

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