

Chapter 31

Making Personalization Feel More Personal: A Four-Step Cycle for Advancing the User Experience of Personalized Recommenders and Adaptive Systems

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ABSTRACT

The gold standard for customer service is catering to each individual's unique needs. This means providing them undivided attention and helping them find what they want as well as what they will like, based on their prior history. An illustrative metaphor of the ideal interpersonal relationship between retailers and consumers is the "sincere handshake," welcoming a familiar face to a familiar place and saying goodbye until next time, best symbolizes an ideal interpersonal relationship between retailers and consumers. In this chapter the authors offer a four-step cycle of this personalization process, which abstracts the key elements of this handshake in order to make it possible in mass digital consumerism. This model offers an ideal framework for drawing out the key lessons learned from the two previous stages of media evolution, Micro and Mass, as well as from social science and Human Computer Interaction (HCI) to inform the design and further the understanding of the rich capabilities of the current age of Digital Consumerism.

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PERSONALIZATION CYCLE: ABSTRACTING THE KEY ELEMENTS FOR THE HANDSHAKE

The key aspects of the interaction between the customer and retailer that make it feel personalized can be abstracted and broken down into a four-step cycle: 1) Gather user information and needs, 2) Build user model and profile, 3) Match user with appropriate available content, and 4) Present personalized content (see Figure 1).

The first step in the interaction between media, content, product, or service providers and consumers with personalized service is assessing the consumer's demographics and unique preferences. Just as in retail, a key part of this initial assessment is trying to assess their goals- whether they are in search of something specific or browsing a la window-shopping. Once this has been done either through explicit or implicit input, the provider can formulate an internal model of whom the person is and what they might like. Then utilizing this model the provider can determine what available products or services will best suit this particular consumer. Finally, based on the previous three steps, the provider can assess how to best pack-

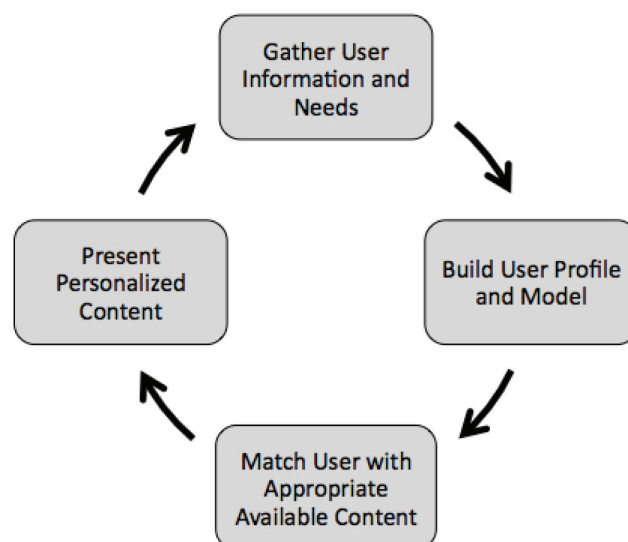
age and frame the recommended content when presenting it to the consumer and follow through accordingly. This personalization process can be conceptualized as a cyclical one as the recommender agent can iterate and continue to refine their understanding and modeling of a user, expand their library of matching content, and improve on how they frame the personalized content when presenting it to each individual consumer. With the cyclical nature and striving for constant improvement the retailer can adhere to the age old adage that the customer is always right.

Together this four step-cycle abstracts the key steps necessary for personalization away from the intricate human production and computing processes necessary for execution. By doing so this model provides a framework for identifying exactly where the insights and future investigations from social science and HCI can help make personalization feel more personal for consumers.

Micro Consumerism: A Friendly Handshake

A frequently visited local video rental store provided an ideal setting for this handshake to take

Figure 1. The personalization process



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