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Persuasive Recommender Systems

Conceptual Background and Implications

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Chapter 1
Introduction

With the seemingly infinite amount of information available in online environ-ments, a growing number of users seeks an effective way to find information online. Accordingly, recommender systems that provide personalized support to online users in their information search and decision-making are increasingly seen as necessary and critical components of the online user's web experience (Ochi et al. 2010; Zanker and Ninaus 2010). Recommender systems are available across various domains, including online dating, travel, books, movies, electronics, etc. Yet, although these systems are expected to support online users in complex decision-making processes, they are often not used efficiently due to a lack of confidence in the recommendations they provide (Moulin et al. 2002). Recent survey findings (ChoiceStream 2009) indicated that more than one-half (59 %) of Internet users were not happy with the product recommendations they received at e-commerce sites. These findings suggest that it is important for recommender system research to examine factors that influence the likelihood of recommenda-tions to be accepted and integrated into decision-making processes. Most recom-mender system research has focused on improving the matching algorithms while a considerably smaller stream of research has explored factors that influence qualities of the system-user interaction (Mahmood et al. 2008). Interactions with recommender systems are in essence conversations that should be examined from a communication point of view (Lucente 2000). The traditional persuasion liter-ature suggests that people are more likely to accept recommendations when the sources display persuasive cues during the interaction process. Recommender systems are sources with the need to persuade their users. Indeed, it has been argued that creating a persuasive recommender system is important in increasing the likelihood of recommendation acceptance (Fogg 2003; Dijkstra et al. 1998; Jiang et al. 2000; Zanker et al. 2006; Gretzel and Fesenmaier 2007; Nguyen et al. 2007; Yoo and Gretzel 2008). The question of how to actually translate persua-siveness into system characteristics in the context of recommender systems, however, still underexplored.

Existing research conducted from a communication perspective suggests that technologies can be more persuasive when leveraging social aspects that elicit