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ELECTRICAL AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Kyung-Hyan Yoo · Ulrike Gretzel
Markus Zanker

Persuasive
Recommender
Systems
Conceptual
Background
and Implications



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Persuasive Recommender Systems

Conceptual Background and Implications

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ISSN 2191-8112
ISBN 978-1-4614-4701-6
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4614-4702-3
Springer New York Heidelberg Dordrecht London

ISSN 2191-8120 (electronic)
ISBN 978-1-4614-4702-3 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012940952

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Theoretical Background	3
2.1	Relevant Communication Theories	3
2.1.1	Communication-Persuasion Paradigm	3
2.1.2	Media Equation Theory	5
2.2	Recommender Systems as Persuasive Social Actors	6
2.3	Conceptual Framework	7
3	Source Factors	9
3.1	Source Factors in Human–Human Communication	9
3.1.1	Credibility	9
3.1.2	Likeability	10
3.1.3	Multiple Sources	10
3.1.4	Source Cues	11
3.2	Applying Source Factors to Technology	14
3.2.1	Source Factors in Technology Contexts	14
3.2.2	Source Factors in Recommender Systems	15
4	Message Factors	21
4.1	Message Factors in Human–Human Communication	21
4.1.1	Message Structure	21
4.1.2	Message Content	23
4.1.3	Sequential-Request Strategies	24
4.2	Applying Message Factors to Technology	24
4.2.1	Recommendation Content	24
4.2.2	Recommendation Format	25
5	Receiver and Context Factors	27
5.1	Receiver Factors in Human–Human Communication	27

- 5.1.1 Natural Receiver Characteristics 27
- 5.1.2 Induced Receiver Factors 28
- 5.2 Context Factors in Human–Human Communication 29
- 5.3 Applying Receiver and Context Factors to Technology 31
 - 5.3.1 Recommender System User Factors 31
 - 5.3.2 Context Factors in Recommender Systems 32
- 6 Discussion 35**
- 7 Implications for Recommender System Design 37**
 - 7.1 Implications from the Source Perspective 38
 - 7.2 Implications from the Message Perspective 42
 - 7.3 Implications from the Receiver Perspective 44
- 8 Directions for Future Research. 45**
- References 47**

Chapter 1

Introduction

With the seemingly infinite amount of information available in online environments, 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 recommendations to be accepted and integrated into decision-making processes. Most recommender 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 literature 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 persuasiveness 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