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Reconceptualizing personalized recommendations as dynamic signals: a consumer's perspective

Shobhana Chandra ; Binilkumar Amarayil Sreeraman; Sanjeev Verma

+ Author & Article Information

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Purpose

This paper aims to understand the consumer perception of personalization in personalized recommendations.

Design/methodology/approach

A qualitative approach consisting of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was adopted.

Findings

Prior research suggests that users evaluate the quality of personalized recommendations (PRs) based on accuracy, novelty and diversity. Indian consumers, however, also consider factors such as adaptation, observable bias and redundancy in their perception of personalization. Secondly, consumers seek coherence in product information, collective consumer opinions, deals, popularity and endorsement badges when forming their opinions about PRs. Thirdly, although earlier research identifies lack of trust as the primary inhibitor of online purchase intention, the findings of this study indicate that with experience, consumers tend to focus more on risk minimization. Finally, Indian consumers are increasingly aware of the influence of PRs on impulse purchases and the sustainability of their consumption.

Research limitations/implications

This study relies on qualitative techniques of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, restricted to Indian consumers. The authors recommend a quantitative and cross-country approach to increase the generalizability.

Practical implications

The practical implications for practitioners from this study are to avoid the appearance of the same items multiple times in the recommendation, have a single list of recommendations and create nudges to help consumers consume responsibly.

Originality/value

Consumers perceive personalization as an evolving mechanism characterized by the absence of repetition and bias. Secondly, with accumulated experience, their evaluative focus transitions from establishing trust to minimizing perceived risk. Thirdly, consumers increasingly expect recommender systems to facilitate sustainable consumption practices – by not merely promoting environmentally responsible products but also constraining excessive consumption behaviors.

Keywords: Qualitative research, Electronic commerce, Consumer experience, Customers perception

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