Kant

Making It Personal

Algorithmic Personalization, Identity, and Everyday Life

Targeted advertisements, tailored information feeds, and recommended content are now common and somewhat inescapable components of our everyday lives. With the help of searches, browsing history, purchases, likes, and other digital interactions, technological experiences are now routinely "personalized." Companies with access to this information often downplay the fact that users' personal data serves as a key form of monetization, and their privacy policies tend to use the terms "personalization" and "customization" to legitimize the practice of tracking and algorithmically anticipating users' daily movements. In Making it Personal, Tanya Kant sheds light on the dilemmas of algorithmic personalization, exploring such key contemporary questions as: What do users really know about the algorithms that guide their online experiences and social media presence? And if personalization practices seek to act on our behalf, then how can users constitute, retain, or relinquish their autonomy and sense of self? At the heart of the book are new interviews and focus groups with web users who-through a myriad of resistant, tactical, resigned or trusting engagements-encounter algorithmic personalization as part of their lived experience on the web. Tanya Kant proposes that for those who encounter it, algorithmic personalization creates epistemic uncertainties that can emerge as trust or anxiety, produces an ongoing struggle for autonomy between user and system, and even has the power to intervene in identity constitution. In doing so, algorithmic personalization does not just generate "filter bubbles" for individuals' worldviews, but also creates new implications for knowledge production, the deployment of cultural capital as an algorithmic tactic, and, above all, formations of identity itself.

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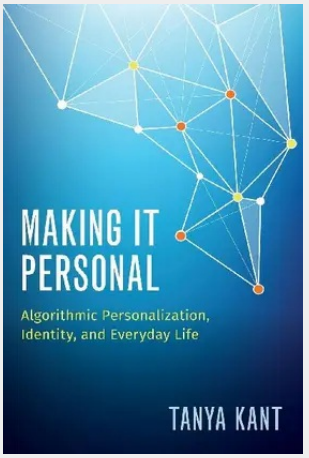

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