

Manipulation on Social Media



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Algorithm Overview

- Algorithms favor relevancy over publish time
 - “By default, social media algorithms take the reins of determining which content to deliver to you based on your behavior.” [1]
- Facebook or Twitter vs Youtube
 - Categories, tags and keywords factor into recommended content on any given network.
- Youtube’s algorithm
 - Billions of recommendations a day
 - Original goals: “Maximize the likelihood the user will click on a video and the time they spend on the platform” - Guillaume Chaslot [3]

What's the problem?

- The users are no longer the customer
- The average person spends ~4 hours on their phones daily.^[2]
- Algorithms aren't built to help you
- The user has no control
 - Algorithm determines the content
 - Facebook hiding content
 - Youtube videos surging randomly
- Constant evolution
- Misinformation/Disinformation
 - Cambridge analytica



How are the Algorithms Manipulating us?

- Social media algorithms reliant on people's behavior
- Use of the concept of Wisdom of crowds
- Manipulative features
 - Exploitation of brain chemistry



Taking advantage of our Brains

- 'Pull-to-refresh' == Slot machine lever
- Endless feeds == Windowless casinos
- The removal of stopping cues
 - Ethical game developers
 - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram



Abusing Dopamine^[2]

- No shortage of dopamine triggers
 - Like buttons
 - Gamification elements
 - Take advantage of basic social impulses and anxieties
 - Pressure of reciprocation
 - Read ticks
 - Unread messages
 - Process of replying dots



Ethics

- Kantianism
 - Unethical
- Traditional Ethical problem:
 - Same issues that casino's face
 - Casinos: Wastes time and money
 - Chance to win
 - Social Media: Wastes only time
 - Collecting and using personal data
 - No chance to win



What's the future looking like?

- Primarily uncertain
- Reasons for optimism



Conclusion / Wrap up

- Be more aware of when and how
- Your privacy and time matters
- Adopt similar casino tricks
 - Online free casinos



Questions/Comments



Links

[1] <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>

[2] <https://www.sciencefocus.com/future-technology/trapped-the-secret-ways-social-media-is-built-to-be-addictive-and-what-you-can-do-to-fight-back/>

[3] <https://singularityhub.com/2019/10/17/youtubes-algorithm-wants-to-keep-you-watching-and-thats-a-problem/>