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Personalisation 101 For News Media

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What is personalisation?

Automation vs. personalisation

Active vs. passive

Editor vs. algorithm

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Readers are different

Plays the crossword every day

Wants to be up to date on current affairs

Has time on their hands

Dreaming about their next vacation

Likes tennis

Is busy, only wants ‘need to know’ info

Likes sports

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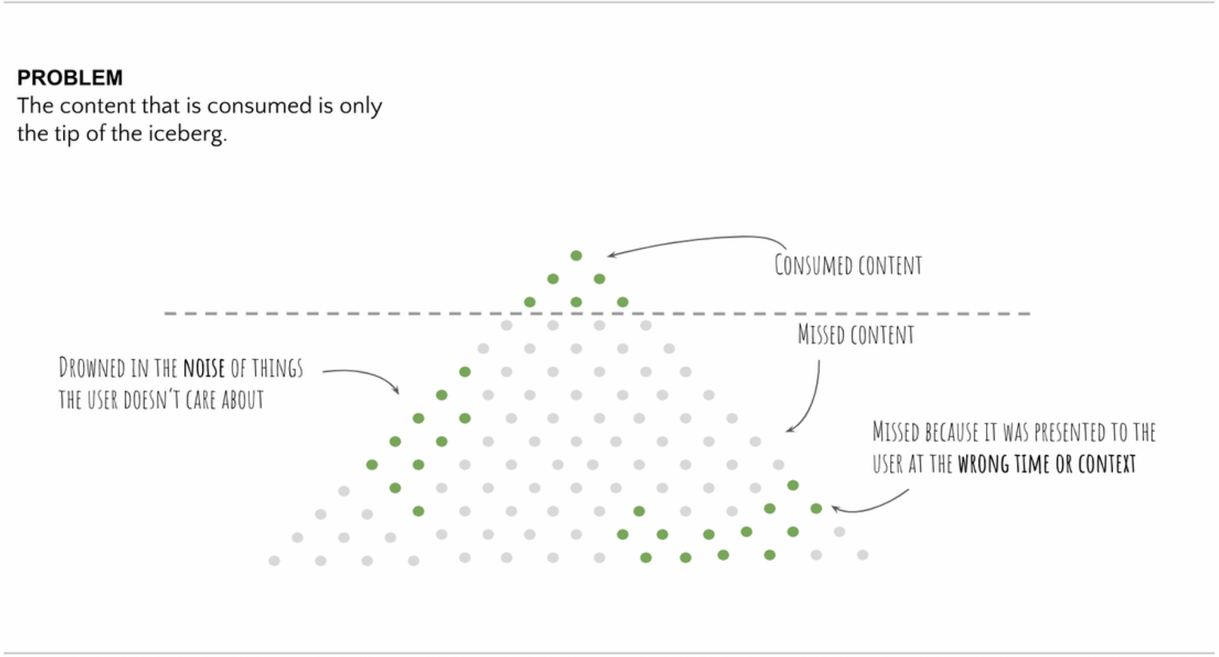
Why personalise?

Give customers what they want -- quickly

Show customers the things they may otherwise miss



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Why personalise?

Give customers what they want -- quickly

Show customers the things they may otherwise miss

Manage the needs of different cohorts, easily

It's becoming industry standard for digital content

- *Streaming services:* Netflix, Spotify, Hulu
- *Social media:* Facebook, Instagram, TikTok

The cost of *not* personalising may be high

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What can be personalised?

Pretty much anything, including …

- Content subject matters
- Headlines
- Sequencing
- Content formats

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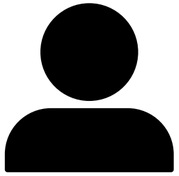
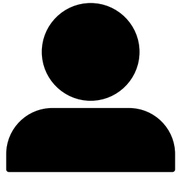
Editors vs. algorithms

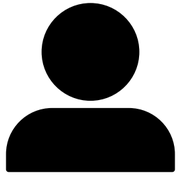
Editors ARE the selection, they are the ones who determine what's important



The algos are successful! Why don't we personalise everything?



If we're producing everything ourselves we know it's fit to be on the homepage



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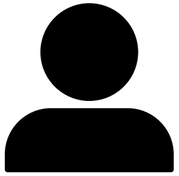
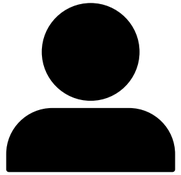


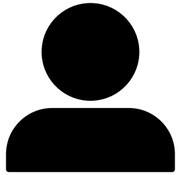
- We have many audiences, if we show content that they are personally not interested in they may lose interest in our product
- We aren't surfacing niche content that that is highly relevant to an individual

The algos are successful! Why don't we personalise everything?



- Likely always need editorial judgement for the "need to know"
- Allow for dependencies: eg I don't like sports except when England wins the World Cup
- Some stories need more air such as deep investigations

If we're producing everything ourselves we know it's fit to be on the homepage



- Home page needs to reflect the brand. Imagine a New York Times with modern love and obituaries only
- We're a long way off a perfect algorithm

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There is still much to consider

How will you communicate with your readers?

How does the home page stitch together to keep the brand feel from the snapshot of content?

How does this change institutional structures such as the Page 1 meeting?

What are you optimising for?

- Instant metrics such as click through rates?
- Lagging metrics such as conversion, engagement, retention?

How are we measuring success? What criteria are we comparing it to?

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Discussion

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Smart Data Initiative
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Readers First Initiative
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Five questions to ask yourself

1. How do you define personalisation for your business?
2. What are the goals? And therefor what are the metrics?
3. Should I invest in this? What's the RoI
4. Where do we start? What is personalised? For whom?
5. Who manages this within your organisation?