

# **Future Trends Group 10-28**

## **E-Commerce**

by

**Lee Yi Kai (L)**

**Augustin Chau**

**Clarence Yee**

**Zachary Lee**

## **Outline**

The Increase In Curated Information And What It Entails

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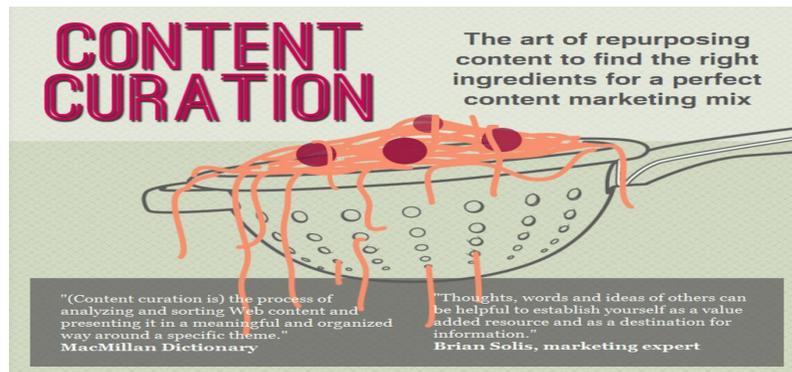
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## The Curation Of Information



Content curation occurs when an individual or team consistently collects, highlights and shares the most relevant and greatest quality digital content on a specified topic for their selective market. This curation of information has evolved with the great integration of technology into society and daily life. As more and more users frequent online sites, they are unwittingly providing their valuable data to online marketers, who discern patterns in such data and use this information to disseminate advertisements specifically tailored to be as personalised as possible to maximise the sales of advertised products. This data is also known as 'Big Data', and many well-known companies such as Netflix and Amazon use this data bank to improve their sales figures through the briefly aforementioned targeted advertisements that are created and refined with the access to such information. Although such 'Content Curation' have proved to be a commercial success, it has also stripped the privacy that the internet supposedly provides to netizens, and as people online start to grow more accustomed to such advertisements, they might grow stagnant and prove to be unable to make decisions by themselves since 'Content Curation' has already made a majority of their decisions for them. As such, a feedback loop is created, which results in targeted advertisements growing far more prolific and captivating, while also enhancing and feeding off the detrimental effects contributed by such targeted advertisements.

## **Specific Community Identified : Netizens**

We have decided to focus on online audiences as we believe that this group will receive the brunt of targeted advertisements, products of the curation of information and as such advertisements are 'targeted' at them it becomes very difficult for them to resist their urge to shop online. As information becomes increasingly curated and adapted such that it is most appealing to online customers, these targeted advertisements will only become more pervasive and alluring to people with access to the internet all around the world, crossing not just private boundaries, but possibly ethical ones as well, as one's personal data is openly marketed and used against oneself as a marketing ploy.

# **Types of Targeted Advertising**

## **1. Behavioral Targeting**

Behavioral Targeting is a form of targeted advertising that enables advertisers and publishers to show relevant ads and marketing messages to online audiences by utilizing their web-browsing behavior. This form of targeting usually depends on data interconnected to a user's behavior, which includes pages viewed, previous search items and amount of time spent on a website by said user.

## **2. Contextual Targeting**

Contextual advertising is a form of targeted advertising that involves displaying advertisements that are relevant to the page's content. Traditionally, automated systems show ads that are relative to the content of your site based on keyword targeting. One example of such contextual advertising being put to use would be Sony's Wipeout HD, which was one of the very first games to show contextual advertisements before loading.

## **3. Search Retargeting**

Search Retargeting is a form of targeted advertising that involves creating a personalised audience based on their keyword search and through that audience and their online search habits, creating display ads that are sent out to other online browsers as they browse outside of search results.

## **4. Site Retargeting**

Site Retargeting is a form of targeted advertising that involves displaying advertisements to people who have previously visited the website of the marketer using such forms of targeted advertising. The marketer usually sets a cookie in the user's browser through a pixel within their website and targets this user as they visit other websites.

## **5. Predictive Retargeting**

Predictive advertising is a form of targeted advertising that involves employing machine learning to pre-empt future outcomes based on habitual patterns revealed in stored historical data. Studies conducted have shown that remarketing campaigns are more effective than email or search when it comes to conversion, and the efficacy of predictive targeting is amped from how it avoids the pitfall of most forms of remarketing campaigns, which is that not all viewers and clickers of advertisements are genuinely looking to make a purchase.

## **Specific Industry Identified : E-commerce**

E-Commerce refers to commercial transactions that are conducted electronically on the internet. E-Commerce is a prominent sector currently in our tech-driven world, and it has been predicted that the E-Commerce industry will continue to thrive in the future as technology continues to improve and advance.

We have chosen to work with the E-Commerce industry as we feel that the E-Commerce industry is one that will remain largely relevant in the rapidly advancing tech-driven world, and also because online targeted advertisements are often used by big E-Commerce companies such as Lazada and Shopee to attract consumers. We feel that by working with the E-Commerce industry, we will be able to most effectively understand the impacts of content curation and 'Big Data', thus also being able to make the biggest impact on the unfair usage of such aspects.

## **Problems That Content Curation Could Have On Netizens**

### **Problem #1: Selective Placement of Information**

There are thousands of other sites and information on the Internet that users can search from. With content curation, Big Data is specifically selecting content that we are going to view first. It would perpetuate the one-sided content that is being rolled out to individual audiences, which would then result in the lack of diversity resulting in the information that audiences are exposed to.

Research :

- 1) Organizations develop a system of internal communication and quality-checking before they publish 3rd-party information. Curata found that 78% of marketers are using at least one brand-wide resource to compile, and annotate links for content curation. This evidence suggests that algorithms compile information of consumers before disseminating them, causing content to be only targeting that specific audience, perpetuating one-sided information that consumers are exposed to.
- 2) A recent article in Scoop.it quoted Matt Cutts saying, "It's important to realize that if you look at content on the web, something like 25 or 30 percent of all of the web's content is duplicate content." It shows us how many curated content are duplicates, and may continue perpetuating one-sided views on target audiences.

### **Problem #2: There are too many stakeholders that need to be addressed**

E-commerce companies serve consumers, retail institutions and other banks. Those are three distinct customer segments with wildly different content needs. Yet there is only one news feed. One content stream is unable to address the information needs of all three market segments in a meaningful way.

Research :

- 1) E-commerce companies need to consider consumers, employees, shareholders, landlords and suppliers. With algorithms targeting one single feed, it is very difficult and almost impossible to provide for every stakeholder.
- 2) According to clutch.co/ , advertising influences 81% of millennials ages 18 to 34 to make a purchase and just 57% of Baby Boomers 55 and older. It shows us the different perceptions of advertisements that differing stakeholders hold, and that just by age gap, there is already a huge gap between what their needs.

### **Problem #3: Loss of individuality**

With the curation of content, information rolled out will also be based on what others are searching for. When this happens, subliminally accurate curations are slowly chipping away at our freedom of thought as more and more of us fall into the cyclical process of 'curated thinking', thinking that we really 'want' or 'need' a something because of what others are interested in when we do not. People would give in to trends or peer pressure which therefore leads to the loss of their own individuality.

Research :

- 1) When we hear or see negative media about a specific subject we have already formed our own opinions or thoughts about we may become swayed but the information the media provides is not always accurate. Also, we may conform to social norms and begin to change our opinions based on what society believes acceptable behaviors to be. This big data then may hence cause us to lose our individuality.

- 2) According to <https://www.washingtonpost.com/Tech> companies hope to automate the choices, both large and small, we make as we float through the day. It's their algorithms that suggest the news we read, the goods we buy, the paths we travel, the friends we invite into our circles.

#### Problem #4: Data security and security gaps

The importance of data security cannot go unnoticed. However, as solutions are being implemented, it is not always easy to focus on data security with many moving pieces. Data also needs to be stored properly, which starts with encryption and constant backups. Netizens nowadays may worry about their personal data falling into the wrong hands or being misused.

Research :

- 1) Research by Curata has found that curating is not a new or innovative practice any longer, it has become the norm. Only 5% of the marketers worldwide surveyed in their annual report never share other organization's content, while nearly one third share blogs, industry publications, or other resources on a daily basis. This shows us how content and data that we feed to companies may be manipulated or shared with other third-party organisations, and there may be security gaps in these Big Data algorithms.
- 2) Based on Curata statistics, 80% of marketers share 3rd-party content in order to improve company visibility and buzz.
- 3) Facebook collects many information about us, such as our email address and even our battery percentage. Even though Facebook does not sell our data, it sells the access to our data and News Feed to other companies, and uses that to provide us with more specific advertisements that we are more likely to click on. This targeted advertisement is big revenue for Facebook. The company reported advertising revenue of \$40 billion last year. This shows us the vulnerability of our data if there were to be security breaches and gaps, and how curation of data may lead to the distrust of netizens.

#### Problem #5: Curated information may be low in quality and inaccurate

Having a curated feed is only useful when it is accurate. Low quality feeds not only serve no purpose, but it also uses unnecessary storage and can harm the ability to gather insights from it. This may include flaws such as repeated data, missing data or inconsistencies etc. If feeds are not maintained or recorded properly, it is just like not having the curation in the first place.

Research :

- 1) Before sharing an article, or embed a video, companies need to consider whether it is relevant to audiences, and sufficiently high-quality to represent your organization. In fact, research by Curata shows that 30% of marketers report it is harder to find quality information than it was in 2011.
- 2) According to <https://www.mediapost.com/>, some 47% report that ads seem to understand their needs at least "sometimes," 26% said online ads "hardly ever" understand them, and 9% said they "never" understand them.
- 3) According to [clutch.co/](http://clutch.co/) , the least trustworthy advertising mediums are online (41%) and social media (38%).

## **Underlying Problem**

**Given that** targeted advertisements have progressed with the advancements of technology and are now more pervasive and efficient than ever, netizens and people who frequent online sites might cease to remain in touch with their individuality as information gets increasingly curated and tailored to trends and figures and 'Big Data' and targeted advertisements are twisted and improved in a way that exploits the sought after convenience stemming from this content curation.

**How might we** embattle ourselves against this complex issue of 'targeted advertisements' which might dissolve the ability to think for those who often go online, providing the internet with data that is in turn used against them as a marketing ploy through targeted advertisements, and empower these people to make their own decisions as technology and retain their individuality as technology continues to enhance such advertisements in the years 2040 and beyond?

## **Solutions**

### Solution #1 : Smart Ad-Blocker Extension

A Smart Ad-Blocker extension that blocks out all advertisements and cookies on a website while saving these advertisements for later use may be introduced. This helps to tone down on the uncomfortable level of pervasiveness that targeted advertisements are often associated with, allowing for surfers of the internet to retain and preserve their personal space, while also empowering them to make decisions by providing them with a mini-catalogue of advertised products that they might possibly be interested in. This also helps online marketers, which might lose some of their target audience due to the nature of ad-blockers. Storing their advertisements for later viewing may hamper the outreach of such marketers, but it does not completely prevent such advertisements from reaching their intended audience.

Research :

- 1) According to DigitalInformationWorld, a whopping 47 percent of internet users use an ad-blocker today, and the top three motivations for using such ad-blockers are because of “Annoying or Irrelevant Ads,” “Too Many Ads” and “Intrusive Ads”. This highlights the popularity of existing ad-blockers, showing that an upgraded and Smart Ad-Blocker feature would be very attractive and sought after. The top three motivations cited for using such Ad-Blockers also emphasizes on the “intrusive” and “annoying” nature of targeted advertisements, which such a Smart Ad-Blocker feature should be able to tackle effectively.
- 2) According to Statista.com, the average global ad-blocking rate in early 2018 was estimated at 27%.
- 3) As of December 2016, more than 600 million devices — 11% of the world’s entire internet-connected population — were running ad blocking software globally .(showing an upward trend)

### Solution #2: Implementing Advertising Policies and Improving Guidelines

The advent of content curation and targeted advertising has proven to be a worrisome problem, and as such, governments can opt to work together with prominent powerhouses like Google to implement new advertising policies in order to keep up with the proliferation of such targeted advertisements. They may also choose to revisit pre-existing guidelines to ensure that they are relevant and up-to-date. For example, companies can introduce policies that limit the number of advertisements shown on webpages.

Research :

- 1) Google has taken steps to tone down on the uncomfortably personal nature of targeted advertisements by implementing policies that prohibit the implication of “personally identifiable and sensitive information within the ad”

- 2) In 2016, Singapore released new guidelines to help regulate advertising on digital platforms. Although the guidelines are mainly focused on the ethical aspect of online advertising, such as the clarity and appropriateness of such ads, they can be revamped in the future to help hone in on the problem of targeted advertising.
- 3) Facebook's advertising guidelines state that advertisers "must not use targeting options to discriminate against, harass, provoke, or disparage users or to engage in predatory advertising practices".

### Solution #3: Upgraded Transparent Browser Mode

A Transparent Browser Mode that completely inhibits the collection of a person's personal data such as their search and site-visit history as well as online activity may be introduced. Although 'Incognito', a private browsing mode is currently available on Google and multiple other search engines which allows for the user of such to browse without fear of their data being collected, these private browsing modes often come with a warning, stating "your activity might still be visible to : websites you visit, your employer or school and your internet service provider." As such, even as pre-existing private browsing modes grant users with a blanket of anonymity and safe privacy, this safe space is more one-dimensional in the sense that it only protects the user's data from the search engine and does not actually prevent websites or internet service providers from looking through users' viewed content and gathering information that may be converted or added to a database of 'Big Data'. It can also be argued that such an 'Upgraded Transparent Browser Mode' that grants complete privacy already exists in the form of the Dark Web, but the Dark Web is not easily accessible and is also a dangerous place. The goal of such an 'Upgraded Transparent Browser Mode' would be to grant not just a private space, but also a safe one to those who frequently surf the internet and are averse to the notion of their data being collected and used as part of a marketing scheme. As a result, these existing 'Incognito' modes may be worked on and upgraded upon so as to grant complete privacy from all sources, which can thereafter more efficiently prevent data from being collected from unaware netizens, overall combating the problem of targeted advertising and content curation.

#### Research :

- 1) According to a survey conducted by Elie.Net, 20.1% of respondents use private browsing, which means that a little over one in three (35%) people who know about private browsing mode use it. This shows the prevalence of pre-existing private browsing mode, showing that the public would probably be receptive to the introduction of an 'Upgraded Transparent Browser Mode'.
- 2) According to another survey conducted by Elie.Net, 54% of respondents have stated that they opt to use private browsing modes to evade the monitoring of websites they visit. This is indeed worrisome and it has previously been mentioned that websites are still able to track users' activity in 'Incognito' Mode. As such, this shows that such an 'Upgraded Transparent Browser Mode' would be able to help internet users browse without having to fear their data being collected by the websites that they visit.
- 3) According to a study conducted by DuckDuckGo, 76% of Americans who use Private Browsing mode cannot accurately identify the privacy benefit it provides. Furthermore, around 68% of that group overestimate the protection that Private Browsing provides. This highlights the main area of improvement that current private browsing modes have yet to acknowledge, which is the overall privacy that it supposedly provides.

## **Decision Criteria**

“Which solution would be the **least expensive** to implement so as to encourage governments and companies alike to take on and welcome the development of such a solution?”

“Which solution would be the **most effective** in helping users preserve their decision-making without greatly impeding the publicity that targeted advertisements provide so as to appease companies which market their products using such targeted advertisements whilst allowing for users to exert more control over such schemes which utilise ‘Big Data’?”

“Which solution would be **the fastest to implement** so that this Smart Ad-Blocker can be put into use as quickly as possible so as to mitigate the long-term effects that curated information and targeted advertisements can have on humanity as a whole?”

“Which solution would be the **most attractive** to users and netizens, such that more people will opt to use this Smart Ad-Blocker?”

“Which solution is the **most unique and innovative** to convince governments and companies alike to take on and welcome the development of such a solution?”

## Decision Matrix

Solution	Alternative Solutions	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5	Total
1	Smart Ad-Blocker	4	5	3	5	2	19
2	Policies	3	4	2	1	1	11
3	Transparent Browser Mode	3	4	3	5	3	18

## **Action Plan**

We, the Ministry of Communications and Informations will work together with app developers to make and introduce a smart ad-block feature that will filter out these targeted advertisements. This smart ad-block feature filters targeted advertisements and allows users to come back to see what would have been recommended to them later on. It aims to reduce external influence on our decisions and thoughts in order to preserve our ability to think for ourselves and make our own decisions in the year 2040 and beyond after getting approval and developing this feature. This feature can also be released globally with time giving Singapore recognition for its work and insight into this problem. It may even generate some revenue should Singapore charge other countries for it. Development of the smart ad-block feature will begin in 2025 after receiving approval from the Parliament. Implementation after improvements are made from testing and feedback will be done in 2031 and by 2040, all Singaporeans will have access to this feature and most will be using it.

## **Implementation Timeline**

2025: Parliament decides to implement the creation of smart ad-block feature to preserve our ability to think for ourselves and make our own decisions.

2027: Smart ad-block feature is created by app developers together with the Ministry of Communications and Informations.

2028: Selected regions in Singapore are registered in the servers for the Smart Ad-Blocker for a trial-run of around 1 to 2 years.

2030: Feedback is obtained from the participants for improvement.

2030: Government debates the implementation of smart ad-block feature based on user feedback.

2031: Smart ad-block feature (improved version) is being improved with the feedback.

2035: Smart ad-block feature steadily gains users.

2040: Essentially all Singaporeans and people living in Singapore use this smart ad-block feature.

## **Addressing our key verb phrase**

The Key Verb Phrase in our fundamental problem is “to empower these people to make their own decisions”. This is addressed by our action plan and solution, as the smart ad-blocker has multiple features such as the feature which enables it to save certain advertisements for later viewing, giving users a mini-catalogue of stored advertisements to pick and choose from, thus empowering them to make their own decisions. In fact, choosing to use the Smart Ad-Blocker is a decision by itself, and by opting to use the Smart Ad-Blocker, one has already been empowered to make his/her own decision to protect himself/herself from falling into the clutches of dissolved individuality and decision-making caused by targeted advertisements.

## **Impact & Consequences**

The implementation of the smart ad-blocker would have a positive impact on users of the internet and will serve as a great step forward in preserving decision-making capabilities and helping netizens avoid fostering an over-reliance on the convenience that content curation has provided. As this smart ad-blocker will block out targeted advertisements and save them for later viewing, this ensures that these targeted advertisements will not affect and influence internet surfers so as to allow them to have an undeterred time while browsing the internet, and the option to save targeted advertisements for later viewing empowers these users to make their own decisions, further preserving and enabling users to retain their decision-making capabilities. However, such ad-blockers will invariably diminish sale figures and the overall outreach of targeted advertisements, and will inevitably hurt the revenue garnered by E-Commerce companies. That is why we propose to have a saving function to the ad-blockers, so as to allow ad-blockers to retain their ability to draw people to their websites while minimising the annoying intrusive nature of such ‘in-your-face’ targeted advertisements.

## **Why our action plan is feasible**

As mentioned before, Ad-Blockers are currently very popular, and have large user bases. With the proliferation and rise of increasingly targeted advertisements, the introduction of an upgraded and ‘Smarter’ version of such Ad-Blockers is bound to attract a greater audience who seek the services of Ad-Blockers. The Smart Ad-Blocker also does not directly oppress the publicity that targeted advertisements are supposed to achieve, with safety nets such as the automatic saving of blocked advertisements for later viewing that ensure companies do not completely lose their ability to draw audiences to their E-Commerce platforms. Ad-Blockers are also free for usage and do not have any paywalls whatsoever, making such extensions easily and readily accessible to all interested internet users. As a result, we feel that our action plan is largely feasible.

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