

How Serendipity Can Help Discovering New Recommendation Spaces

Dr. Christian Matt, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany

Abstract:

Recommender systems are often criticized for keeping users in a “filter bubble” by recommending products that are very close to users’ preferences – yet filter out products that may pleasantly surprise users. We hold that the concept of recommendation serendipity can help users explore new recommendation spaces without sacrificing recommendation quality. Based on a controlled field experiment with 365 subjects using an online music website, our findings show that compared to the previous concept of recommendation novelty, recommendation serendipity has strongly opposing effects on users: while recommendation serendipity has positive effects on both users’ cognitive and affective reactions, recommendation novelty alone is counterproductive and elicits negative cognitive and affective reactions. We also find that preference fit and perceived enjoyment mediate the relationship of novelty/serendipity and the intention to use the recommender and to purchase the recommended products.