

# Mass Personalization, Microtargeting, and the News

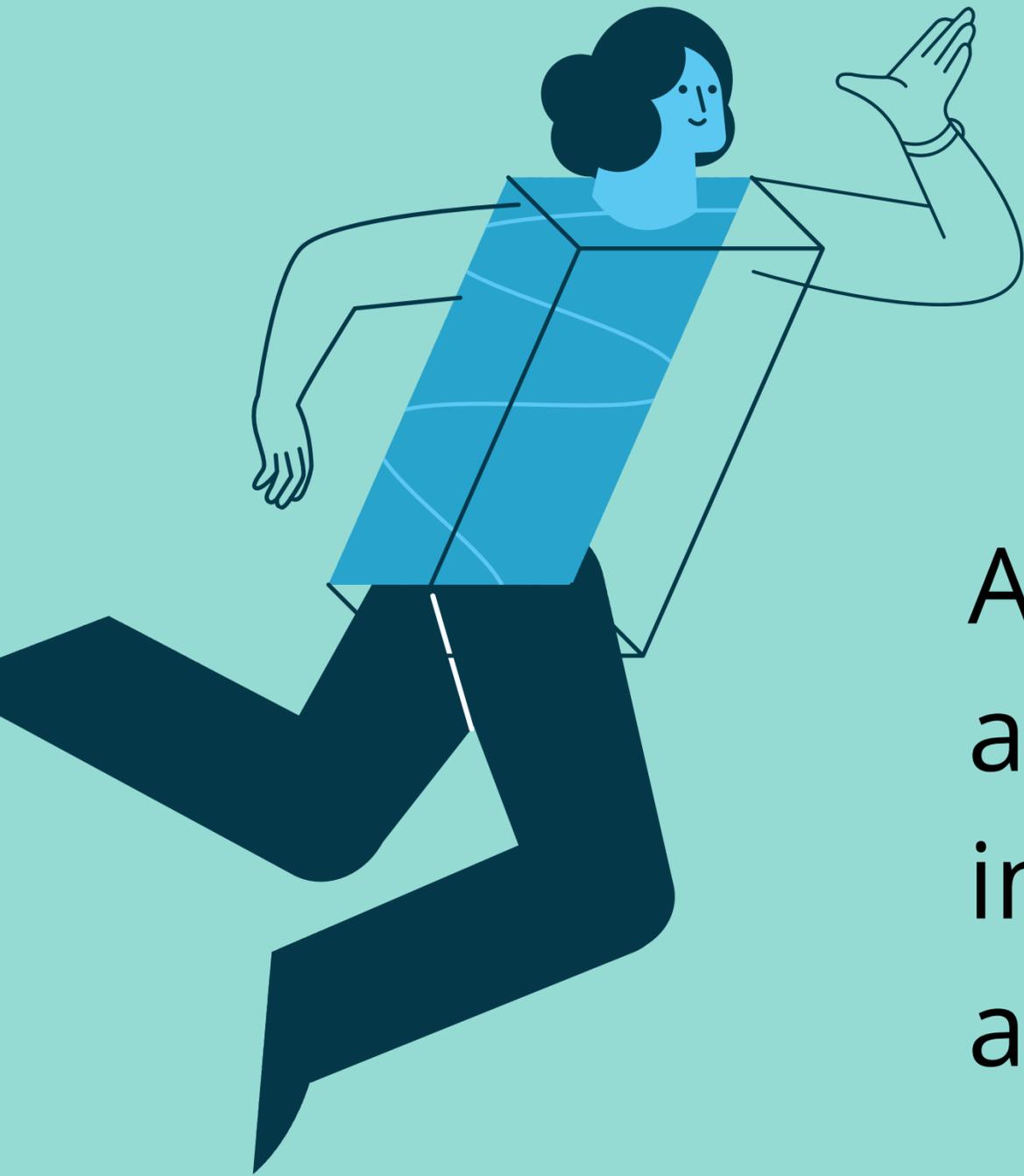


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A presentation by the Mucktracker Team

# Objective

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Analyze how microtargeting practices and personalization algorithms influence how news media is produced and consumed.

## Connect

Do you think people have access to the same news as everybody else in their area? Why or why not?





## Media Platforms: Mass Personalization

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Chances are you *aren't* getting *quite* the same content directed your way as others who reside in your community.

This is because publishers and advertisers discovered they can adapt their content personally for each audience member and—in the process—keep audiences on their site.

This personalization is one of the big changes to the media in recent decades, and it largely has to do with how computers work.

# How Computers Personalize Content

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Because computers can easily access and display large amounts of information very quickly, they have to determine which information to show to users.

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Complex algorithms are often used to determine what kinds of information to display to each user who accesses a site.

- Personalization Algorithms are computer programs that engineers have developed to help people find the information they're looking for, often based on their online habits.



# Your Data and Algorithms

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- To track user activity, commercial websites use cookies, or small text files stored in web browsers.
- This tracking of user activity across the Internet helps newspapers, advertisers, and content providers understand and predict consumer behavior.
- The user data allows publishers to serve up information that's customized to each user's interests and behaviors.
  - In the case of news, this often means readers will receive differing coverage of events, or coverage of entirely different events.

## Compare your feed

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To compare personalization algorithms, ask a friend or acquaintance to compare newsfeeds.

Log into a media platform where you receive news & information, and note the top topics and sources. Ask your partner to do the same.

What are the similarities and differences?





## Microtargeting

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The user information gathered by websites such as news providers creates a detailed picture of consumers and their behavior which is useful for a range of marketers, advertisers, and political campaigns.

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- These groups gain access to users who fit the demographic and psychological profiles their clients wish to specifically target.
- Data about the user helps determine which ads & kinds of sponsored news content are directed their way.



## Reflection.

Read the following scenario and answer the questions that follow.

*Miles wants to learn more about the United States Congress so he starts to look for information on the internet. Soon, he discovers that he's seeing more information about politics and government than he had previously. The more he clicks, the more he begins to receive political ads and ads for sites that specialize in political news content.*

How does this scenario show microtargeting?

What are the pros and cons of this form of content marketing?

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# Wrap-Up

Mass personalization describes the impact of computer-mediated customization and personalization on the mass media, such as the news media.



Microtargeting describes the way that marketers and advertisers can locate specific audiences on platforms that serve large numbers of users.

Browser cookies are an example of the way user behavior can be tracked on the Internet.