

Life-enriching AI tech could have negative impact for users, unless marketers step in

Submitted by: BlueSky Public Relations Ltd

Thursday, 19 November 2020

Lifestyle-enhancing AI services such as fitness trackers, dating apps, smart speakers and photo editors, designed to make consumer's lives easier, healthier and happier may be failing to create the positive impact their developers say they are, according to a new study from the Rotterdam School of Management Erasmus University.

The study, led by Professor Stefano Puntoni (<https://www.rsm.nl/people/stefano-puntoni/>), along with colleagues Prof Rebecca Walker Reczek of Ohio State University, Prof Markus Giesler of York University in Canada and Prof Simona Botti of London Business School, focuses on the growing influence these advanced technologies are having on our day-to-day lives, and the realities of the customer experience.

Whilst software developers position AI as a neutral tool, and evaluate it on its efficiency and accuracy, the researchers argue this approach does not consider the social and individual challenges that can occur when AI is deployed into lifestyle-enhancing products.

The researchers believe that firms need to develop a customer-centric view of AI that focuses not just on its technological capability, but also on how these are actually experienced by consumers – particularly the potential costs that accompany the benefits.

The researchers developed a framework that breaks down the four core experiences consumers have with AI; data capture, classification, delegation and social, to identify the sociological and psychological tensions involved.

For example, AI's ability to capture and analyse personal data from social media users in order to make advertising recommendations, which then infiltrate what users believe to be their private user experience, can cause upset and mistrust or, conversely, influence future activities or purchasing decisions.

Professor Puntoni of the Rotterdam School of Management says,

“Not only are technology companies continually required to find new ways to make monitoring and surveillance palatable to consumers by linking it to convenience, productivity, safety, or health and well-being, they must also constantly push the boundaries of what private information consumers should share through a complex landscape of notifications, reminders, and nudges intended to initiate behavioral change. Thus, AI can transform consumers into subjects who are complicit in the commercial exploitation of their own private experience.”

Published in the Journal of Marketing, the study seeks to bridge the divide between the technological expertise of software designers – whose focus is to create highly capable technology and the human-focused values of marketers, whose priority is to ensure a meaningful consumer experience.

By identifying the consumer experience pressure points that commonly exist in AI services, the study

provides important guidance and recommendations for the computer scientists charged with advancing these technologies in the future, to ensure consumer's wellbeing is well-considered at every level of development.

Going further, the researchers make recommendations outlining the organisational learnings that tech firms must engage in to better lead the deployment of consumer AI, and outline concrete steps they should take to ensure such technologies can provide a truly valuable and life-enriching service in the future.

The full article can be accessed via the Journal of Marketing – Marketing Science Institute (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022242920953847>).

/ENDS

To find out more, or to request an interview with Professor Stefano Puntoni, please contact Kerry Ruffle at BlueSky Education PR – kerry@bluesky-pr.com / +44(0)1582 790701