Like or dislike: How consumptive news feed curation shapes the online advertising experience

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Abstract

Purpose – Understanding how users navigate and personalize their social media news feeds—and how this shapes their overall experience—is increasingly important in an era of pervasive algorithmic content curation. While personalization has become a dominant feature across digital platforms, existing research has largely overlooked how users respond to and manage the influx of personalized content, particularly advertisements. This study addresses this gap by examining the active strategies that users employ to curate their news feeds to reduce exposure to irrelevant advertising.

Design/Methodology – This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured online survey targeting active social media users who engage in consumptive news feed curation. The survey assessed participants' awareness of algorithmic curation, their engagement in consumptive news feed curation behaviours, underlying motivations for curating their news feeds, and their perceived quality of online experience. A total of 292 valid responses were collected. To examine the hypothesized relationships, statistical analyses including Spearman's rank-order correlation, linear regression, ordinal regression, and mediation analysis were performed.

Results – Findings revealed that greater social media activity was associated with higher awareness of consumptive news feed curation. Moreover, engagement in consumptive curation activities resulted in enhanced satisfaction and increased perceived relevance of content. Nonetheless, it did not inherently improve the online experience or diminish advertisement exposure. Task disruption and prior negative advertising experiences were significant motivators for curating news feeds, while the number of strategies used did not mediate the relationship between engagement and experience.

Conclusion – The study highlights that consumptive news feed curation is a user-driven process influenced by awareness and perceived control. It emphasizes the importance of understanding users' intentions in constructing their digital environment and recommends that platforms prioritize openness and user empowerment in curating tools. By identifying the motivations for consumptive news feed curation, designers and marketers may provide more effective, user-centric personalization solutions that improve relevance and mitigate ad fatigue.

Keywords: consumptive news feed curation, social media advertising, advertisement avoidance, online experience, social media algorithms

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1. Introduction

In recent years, social media platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram have become popular sources for accessing news content and information. As a result of the growing popularity, these platforms have become more commonly used by advertisers to target new customers, resulting in a significant influence on the online experience for internet users. To provide these people with the optimal experience, social media platforms often use personalization algorithms to tailor their services to each individual user (Eg et al., 2023).

By monitoring and anticipating the behaviour of platform users, a variety of entertainment, information, and persuasion options can be offered to individuals in highly customized ways, thereby seemingly influencing their social media usage (Hobbs, 2020). This has resulted in users interacting with advertisements differently and making purchasing choices that are influenced by the information they obtain via social media (Cho & Cheon, 2004). Existing research has mainly focused on platform-driven personalization and algorithmic decision making. This study shifts the lens towards users themselves by combining algorithmic literacy and advertising avoidance and focuses on how the users perceive, respond to and manage the advertising content in their social media news feeds.

Some people who are aware of social media algorithms just use them because they think they will give them all the information they need to stay up to date (Bucher, 2016). Nonetheless, there is a subset of people who try to "tell" algorithms what they want to see by adopting more extreme measures (Lee et al., 2019). Consumptive news feed curation refers to these deliberate actions taken to exert control over the news feed to influence the content to be displayed on the homepage (Lu, 2020). Not only does this influence the content you regularly see, but the curation of news feeds also significantly impacts the internet advertising industry, as people are increasingly focused on avoiding advertisements (Kelly et al., 2019). Users can exert control over the advertising information they are exposed to by curating their news feed according to their preferences allowing them to actively avoid or consciously filter out irrelevant advertisements (Van Der Goot et al., 2016).

While existing research has delved into consumptive news feed curation on social media platforms (Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Su et al., 2022), a significant research gap exists concerning how users utilize such curation practices to avoid advertisements (Kelly et al., 2019). Although users can modify their news feed by employing ad-blocking software, concealing, or reporting

advertisements, or customizing their news feed by following or unfollowing specific accounts, there is a lack of research on how this influences the overall online experience of the users. Therefore, this study concentrates solely on the role of users, disregarding the other aspects of news feed curation (Merten, 2020; Lee et al., 2019). We aim to shed light on the personal control users exert over their online experiences by exploring their behaviour and strategies in customizing their news feed and filtering out irrelevant advertisements.

Hence, this study contributes to the current academic conversation in the field of marketing and communication studies by examining the level of awareness and engagement in the curation of news feeds for the purpose of evading irrelevant advertisements. This study will give insights into the intricate dynamics that influence users' online experiences by examining the awareness, attitudes, and behaviours of users in relation to avoiding irrelevant advertisements in news feed curation.

The study will be guided by the following research question: *How do users' awareness of and engagement in curating their social media news feed to avoid irrelevant advertisements shape their online experience?*
This question will be examined by the following sub-questions:

1. How does users' awareness of curating social media news feeds, and their associated level of engagement in doing so, impact their exposure to irrelevant advertisements?
2. What motivates users to actively curate their news feeds to avoid irrelevant advertisements?
3. What benefits do users experience from minimizing exposure to irrelevant advertisements?

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature on consumptive news feed curation and advertising avoidance, forming the theoretical foundation for the study. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology, followed by an analysis of the results in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study integrates insights from three different fields: algorithmic literacy, consumptive news feed curation, and advertising avoidance. By combining these fields, the study develops a comprehensive understanding of how users curate their news feed on social media to avoid irrelevant advertisements.

2.1 Understanding Social Media Personalization Algorithms

In today's world, social media is extensively available and often used by individuals of all ages (Min, 2019). To maximize the amount of time that users spend on these platforms, social media platforms frequently implement personalization algorithms to tailor their offerings to the individual user (Eg et al., 2023). An algorithm is a well-defined computational process that uses a set of steps to take some input values and produce output values (O'Regan, 2018).

Nowadays, nearly all aspects of internet usage are influenced by algorithmic personalization, which shapes the informational, entertaining, and persuasive content presented (Hashim & Waden, 2023; Rader & Gray, 2015). In the context of social media, algorithms are computer models that transform data into personalized content that shows up in users' news feeds, such as the "For You Page" on TikTok (Bucher, 2016). These algorithms not only personalize content from pages or friends that users follow, but also the platform's advertisements. The benefit of this is that it can help prevent information overloading and assist users in locating relevant content and advertisements in today's massive stream of information (Metzler & Garcia, 2023).

However, while algorithms are often deemed beneficial, hence their widespread usage, they are not resistant to flaws (Metzler & Garcia, 2023). Because algorithms automatically choose which content and advertisements to display and which to exclude, they inherently limit human agency (Swart, 2021). Users are typically depicted as vulnerable and powerless. They do not know how complex algorithms work and become the subjects of the mythical power of computational calculations that reinforce or amplify social inequalities.

As a result, users do not always passively accept algorithmic decisions (Bucher, 2016). Some may become negotiators who try to understand algorithms and some even challenge and resist algorithms (Min, 2019). Understanding the user's perspective on algorithms is therefore essential and will provide new insights into how people engage with algorithms to avoid irrelevant advertisements, as well as how this affects their online experience.

Another problem with algorithms is that they rely on correlation rather than in-depth information, which makes them susceptible to biases and makes it hard for them to adapt to rapidly changing preferences (DeVito, 2016). As Powers (2017) puts it, personalization algorithms frequently operate as "black boxes", offering limited transparency and making their decision-making processes difficult to interpret.

Consequently, granting authority over algorithms in this fashion seems like a straightforward approach to rectify information and power inequalities in the context of scenarios where citizens and consumers are progressively dependent on algorithmic services (König, 2022). Likewise, Harper et al. (2015) found that individuals who are granted access to these controls evaluate the personalized recommendations considerably higher in quality than the initial recommendations. The participants conveyed a resolute belief that the ability to exercise authority over the content they encounter is crucial for their enjoyment, thereby encouraging their recurrent usage of Instagram (Noguti, 2022).

These studies underscore the significant impact of algorithmic personalization on the online experience and the potential benefits of granting users control over their content (Noguti, 2022; Harper et al., 2015; König, 2022). They suggest that allowing users to customize their news feed will enhance their online experience. Nevertheless, no empirical investigation has been conducted to examine this phenomenon from the user's standpoint. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how user-directed personalization of algorithms influences the online experience.

2.2 Understanding Consumptive News Feed Curation on Social Media

While algorithms continue to play a central role in shaping online content, users are increasingly taking an active role in managing and influencing the content that appears on their social media news feeds. This transition from algorithmic control to user agency establishes the foundation for understanding the role of consumptive news feed curation, which has become an increasingly popular topic of discussion in current research.

According to Howarth's (2015, p. 7) definition, news feed curation is "the process of evaluating and selecting information with the intention of providing news consumers with helpful, relevant, and meaningful content." Expanding on this definition within the context of social media,

Lee et al. (2019) define consumptive news feed curation as a proactive news consumption approach in which users intentionally attempt to influence or manage their news feed.

As noted in the previous section, social media users frequently encounter a restricted portion of the available content when navigating through their news feed (Lee et al., 2019). However, users nowadays have a substantial influence on customizing the information they gather on social media platforms (Merten, 2020). An increasing number of social media platforms have enabled users to select desired and undesirable content (Lee et al., 2019). An illustration of this can be seen in the way Facebook empowers its users to modify their news feed through the addition or exclusion of preferred sources, topics, or opinions (Merten, 2020; Lu, 2020). By strategically using proactive personalization, users can create a news feed that fits their interests and improves automated personalization systems that are already in place (Lee et al., 2019; Merten, 2020).

While this type of control appears to empower individuals, it also raises question about the actual impact on the online experience. As users must decide which specific categories of content and sources they want to prioritize, ignore, engage with, or discard, it remains unclear whether consumptive news feed curation enhances the online experience by increasing satisfaction or helps reduce frustration and information overload (Stepnik, 2023).

Despite considerable uncertainty, every study agrees that curation strategies align social media content with user preferences more effectively. Therefore, according to prior research, it is reasonable to anticipate that consumptive news feed curation will provide the user with more relevant content. However, no analysis has been conducted to determine if this will produce more relevant advertisements and, hence, an improved online experience. Given the growing number of methods for selecting news, it is crucial to examine how different alternatives influence the online experience. Therefore, this study investigates the practice of consumptive news feed curation to avoid advertisements and its effect on the online experience.

2.2.1 Unveiling User Awareness: Understanding Consumptive News Feed Curation on Social Media

The preceding section indicates that users possess the autonomy to curate their news feed. However, it remains unclear to what extent users are aware of the curation possibilities offered by social media platforms.

The emerging body of literature has shown that users vary widely in the degree to which they perceive and understand the behaviour of content filtering algorithms on social media, and these differences affect how they interact with and experience the platforms they are using (Rader & Gray, 2015; Lu, 2020; Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2018).

A study by Powers (2017) found that most college students were unaware of news feed personalization and could not identify the types of actions and criteria that affect news selection and prioritization on Facebook, Google, and other platforms that use personalization algorithms. Those who were aware that algorithms are used to tailor news to their tastes rarely used the term personalization or referenced the use of algorithms (Powers, 2017). A similar study by Eslami et al. (2015) discovered that just 37% were aware of Facebook's news feed algorithm. This lack of awareness is supported by Swart's (2021) research, which demonstrates that, with few exceptions, participants rarely addressed algorithmic curation of their news feeds until expressly prompted. The study by Eslami et al. (2015) clarifies this phenomenon by outlining the traits of passive and active engagement, indicating a tendency for increased awareness among more active users. In other words, algorithmic awareness tends to emerge through repeated interactions with social media platforms.

On the contrary, Rader and Gray (2015) discovered that nearly three-quarters of Facebook users were aware that their news feed would not include all posts from the friends and pages they followed. Similarly, Stepnik (2023) found that all participants demonstrated an awareness of algorithmic processing in the selection of content offered to them on social media. They noticed that this process was constantly evolving based on their own behaviours (Stepnik, 2023).

The results indicate a significant disparity in users' awareness levels. Some people were unfamiliar with the term "algorithm," although others were able to clarify the mechanisms of categorization, profiling, and personalization (Swart, 2021). Users are regularly faced with algorithmically curated environments, but most users lack a clear understanding of how they work and how they can curate them. Therefore, it is important to examine how different levels of awareness influence users' capacity to curate their news feeds effectively and thereby enhancing their online experience.

Participants also changed interaction patterns and exhibited a tendency towards higher satisfaction, with rising algorithmic awareness (Eg et al., 2023). This is consistent with Swart's (2021) findings, which imply that frequent interactions with algorithms help people understand

algorithmic news selection. Building on this, this study further investigates how this awareness influences users' intentional curation of their news feeds, further advancing the discussion on algorithmic engagement and user agency.

H1: Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.

H2: Greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation techniques positively affects individuals' overall experience.

2.2.2 Active Engagement: How Consumptive News Feed Curation Improves the Online Experience

Individuals are continuously required to make decisions about the content they consume (Lee et al., 2019). Even when reading the same traditional newspaper, each reader would read a different set of articles. With the rise of social media, consumers have increasingly become the editors of information, empowered by technology to avoid both content and advertising messages that do not interest them (Kelly et al., 2010).

However, Lu (2020) found that the proportion of people who proactively curated their news feeds remained low. When reviewing the present literature, it appears that the findings of various studies on the engagement in consumptive news feed curation are highly inconsistent. While Powers (2017) discovered that most respondents did not curate their news feed because they just did not know how to do so, Duggan and Smith (2016) observed that over 35% of their survey respondents actively engaged in consumptive news feed curation.

This can be explained by the study of Lee et al. (2019), which found that younger respondents were more likely to engage in consumptive news feed curation. Young people employed various curatorial techniques that they hoped would impact the algorithm's prioritization of content (Stepnik, 2023). Despite the general lack of interest in news among young people (Chyi and Lee 2013), they are more engaged on social media and hence have a greater familiarity with new technologies compared to older individuals. Consequently, they are more inclined to utilize the benefits provided by these technologies.

H3: Users who are more active on social media demonstrate higher levels of engagement in consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.

This growing reliance on consumptive news feed curation by more active users reflects a broader trend where personalization is increasingly recognized as a key factor in enhancing user satisfaction. A study conducted by Noguti (2022) highlights the importance of consumptive news feed curation on social media, as it greatly improves user satisfaction. Platforms can enhance the relevancy of encountered information by enabling users to filter and prioritize content according to their preferences.

Allowing users to customize their social media environment promotes a feeling of control and ownership, which enhances the overall online experience (Noguti, 2022). This is consistent with Kelly et al.'s (2018) research, which indicates that users prioritize favourable outcomes and avoid unfavourable ones, which again supports the notion that curation improves the overall online experience. Drawing on the work of Noguti (2022) and Kelly et al. (2018), this research investigates whether the specific curatorial practices that users employ actually lead to an enhanced online experience.

Furthermore, Sundar and Marathe (2010) emphasize that consumptive news feed curation results in increased satisfaction and engagement. Their research indicates that users who customize their online content are more likely to have a positive experience, as they encounter fewer interruptions and more content that is in accordance with their interests. This is further investigated by Chinchanachokchai and De Gregorio (2020), who propose that the online experience is substantially enhanced by the curation of positive stimuli and the reduction of negative stimuli. By examining the practical elements of news feed curation and how it affects the online experience, this study builds upon the research conducted by Sundar and Marathe (2010) and Chinchanachokchai and De Gregorio (2020).

Users who can efficiently eliminate undesired advertisements have reduced annoyance and distraction, resulting in a more pleasant and immersive online environment (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014). The decrease in advertising exposure not only enhances satisfaction but also cultivates a more positive attitude towards the platform itself (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Through the implementation of curation methods, users are empowered to manage and customize their content, thereby reducing unpleasant experiences related to advertising, enhancing the relevancy of the

information, and promoting a higher level of pleasure and engagement. Together, these interconnected elements—content relevance, satisfaction, and less exposure to unwanted advertisements—form the basis of what this study defines as the online experience.

H4a: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation positively affects satisfaction.

H4b: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation positively reduces exposure to unwanted advertisements.

H4c: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation positively affects content relevance.

2.3 Exploring User Strategies in News feed Curation: Navigating Information Landscapes

The evolving landscape of social media has given rise to various strategies employed by users to navigate and, in some cases, actively avoid specific advertisements, thereby influencing the nature of the information they encounter. Recent research has indicated that consumers utilize multiple strategies to curate their news feeds to align them with their personal tastes. DeVito (2016) states that users employ both proactive and reactive curation tactics. Proactive curation is the active search for and subscription to content that corresponds with one's interests, while reactive curation involves the hiding, unfollowing, or reporting of items considered irrelevant or annoying (DeVito, 2016; Eslami et al., 2015). By employing this dual strategy, users can curate a news feed that is tailored to their preferences and interests, resulting in an improved online experience.

A review of the current literature reveals several proactive strategies. At first, platforms offer users the ability to follow specific users or groups (Lee et al., 2019). When users subscribe to pages or groups, the algorithm will prioritize displaying additional content that is comparable to the content that the users are already exposed to. Aside from following certain people or groups who provide relevant content, another beneficial strategy is to actively engage with favourite content by liking, commenting, and sharing (Harambam et al., 2018). This helps algorithms in prioritizing material that is relevant to the user.

When users dislike the information they see, they adopt reactive strategies to curate their news feed. According to Barnidge et al. (2022), blocking individuals or pages or hiding abusive or uninteresting content are the two most popular methods of reactive curation. As a result, the algorithm will exhibit a reduced amount of similar content.

Users can also use third-party services to curate their news feeds. Ad blockers, which eliminate all advertisements from websites, are one example. According to Redondo and Aznar (2018), people's negative attitudes against internet advertising in general often lead to the use of ad blockers because they view it to be invasive and cluttered.

However, consumers also have the option to alter their news feed in a more straightforward way. Social media platforms often give their users the ability to change their user profile and data that are used to show relevant content (Lee et al., 2019). This allows the user to have greater control over the personalization of their information, which in turn alleviates concerns regarding privacy and autonomy (Monzer et al., 2020).

Acquiring knowledge and skills in curation has become crucial for the effective and careful integration of these strategies (Head et al., 2020). To fully comprehend the algorithm-based services that users interact with; it appears necessary for them to possess a specific level of algorithmic literacy (König, 2022). Algorithmic literacy is commonly seen as a skill that enables individuals to analyse and evaluate their interactions with algorithmic systems, such as search engines, and understand the influence of these systems on their capacity to act autonomously (Sander 2020; Bakke 2020). This understanding is developed through their regular contact with algorithms (Swart, 2021).

Regarding algorithmic engagement, those who are enthusiastic and have been using social media for a long time, and thus have more firsthand knowledge with it, often oppose the suggestions and modifications made by algorithms (Chyi and Lee 2013). They alter their behaviour in sharing information in response to the algorithms employed by the platform (Lu, 2020). Based on this it can be suggested that a higher awareness and engagement might lead users to employ more advertising avoidance strategies, which in turn enhances their user experience by reducing unwanted advertisements and increasing satisfaction.

H5: The number of curation strategies employed mediates the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and the online experience.

From permanent actions like unfriending to the intentional curation of news content, users are actively shaping the information landscape on social media platforms. In an era of algorithmic

influence, this highlights the significance of this study in furthering our comprehension of how users navigate and shape their digital information environments.

2.4 Understanding Advertisement Avoidance on Social Media

In the contemporary digital era, individuals are constantly confronted with advertisements, leading to negative perceptions and proactive avoidance tactics (Çelik et al., 2022; Kelly et al., 2019). Individuals avoid advertisements in traditional media through actions such as zapping and exiting the room, but they exhibit even greater resistance to online advertisements due to the perception that online content is freely available (Frade et al., 2021).

Technological advancements have granted users the ability to selectively disregard irrelevant content and advertising messages, thereby empowering them to become more active editors of information (Gritten, 2007). The study conducted by Kelly et al. (2019) suggests that those who actively curate their news feeds have a higher level of success in avoiding irrelevant advertisements. Users can curate their news feeds by selecting preferred sources and filtering out content from sources they dislike, thereby minimizing their exposure to unwanted advertisements. In this sense, advertisement avoidance and consumptive news feed curation are becoming increasingly intertwined. While the study of Kelly et al. (2019) establishes a strong foundation by investigating the avoidance of advertisements through news feed curation, it fails to consider the impact on the online experience. This study will further investigate the efficacy of the curation strategies in avoiding irrelevant advertisements and their influence on the overall experience.

Advertisement avoidance, which means doing anything to see fewer advertisements, has caused people to change how they use social media by using ad-blocking apps or choosing ad-free platform services (Edelman, 2020). Avoidance includes any action that reduces the user's exposure to advertising (Kelly et al., 2018). In a broad sense, advertising avoidance refers to "all measures that consumers of media employ in order to minimize their exposure to advertising content" (Speck & Elliott 1997b, p. 61). Users who exhibit advertising avoidance deliberately steer clear of a particular brand, despite the brand's affordability and accessibility (Niu et al., 2021).

However, avoiding advertisements is more than just not looking at it; it also includes a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses, as Speck and Elliott (1997b) explain. Their groundbreaking research classified avoidance into cognitive (such as flipping or skipping advertising), behavioural (ignoring them), and mechanical (switching channels) dimensions. Cho

and Cheon (2004) expanded upon this understanding through the incorporation of cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of advertising avoidance.

Cho and Cheon (2004) define cognitive advertisement avoidance as the mental processes and strategies individuals use to ignore or avoid advertisements. Affective advertisement avoidance (Youn & Kim, 2019) refers to the emotional and cognitive reactions that deter individuals from viewing advertisements. Behavioural avoidance includes several actions meant to reduce exposure to advertisements, such as leaving websites full of ads or actively closing pop-up ads (Kelly et al., 2018).

Cho and Cheon (2004) identify three primary causes for advertisement avoidance: task disruption, perceived advertising clutter, and negative prior experiences with advertising.

One of the main reasons people are annoyed by online advertisements is that they can get in the way of their main goals and activities (Edwards & Lee, 2002). Given that the internet is more task-oriented and purpose-driven than traditional media, this element is becoming ever more important (Kelly et al., 2010). Evidence for this can be seen in the study of Chung & Kim (2020), who found that consumers may react negatively to an advertisement or product if it slows down or interferes with their ability to retrieve and process information. Users may feel the need to curate their news feeds when they see advertisements that make it hard for them to finish tasks or ruin their browsing experience (Seyedghorban et al., 2015). By purposefully blocking these irrelevant advertisements, users can improve their online interactions, which ensures a focused and useful browsing experience.

Perceived advertising clutter is identified as the second antecedent of online advertising avoidance (Ingram, 2006). According to Speck and Elliott (1997a), high perceived ad clutter leads to negative attitudes toward both advertisements and the media carrying them, increasing advertisement avoidance and lowering engagement. As a result, users may become overwhelmed by advertising clutter, which diminishes their overall online experience (Kelly et al., 2010; Said & Adinata, 2024). To counteract this, users may employ consumptive news feed curation as a strategy to specifically eliminate irrelevant or intrusive advertisements.

According to Cho and Cheon (2004), consumers who have previously experienced irrelevant advertisements are more likely to avoid them in the future, making prior negative experiences an important reason to avoid online advertisements. Users' scepticism and distrust of online advertising arise from prior negative experiences with it (Seyedghorban et al., 2015). This

encompasses cases of internet advertising that has been deceptive, misleading, poorly targeted, or directed individuals to incorrect websites (Kelly et al., 2010). This is an important point because intrusive ads can make the online experience worse and make people less trusting of digital platforms (Chung & Kim, 2020). As a result, people may decide to take charge of their news feeds to avoid having similar bad experiences in the future. By getting rid of ads that are misleading or not useful, users can make the internet a safe and enjoyable place to be. Therefore, the following hypotheses can be stated:

H6a: Task disruptions positively affect users' decisions to curate their news feeds to avoid advertisements.

H6b: Perceived clutter on internet sites positively affects users' decisions to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.

H6c: Poor past experiences with internet advertising positively affect users' decisions to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.

This study predominantly utilizes Cho and Cheon's (2004) advertising avoidance framework; however, it is essential to acknowledge that alternative theoretical perspectives have also been employed to explain user avoidance behaviour. Ad fatigue, for instance, poses a considerable challenge in digital advertising, as repeated exposure to identical advertisements may result in diminished consumer engagement and adverse reactions (Silberstein et al., 2023). Given that this study focuses on user-driven news feed curation, Cho and Cheon's (2004) framework was chosen as it fully incorporates behavioural, cognitive, and mechanical avoidance, thereby offering a holistic perspective on individual advertisement avoidance.

Furthermore, platform-specific characteristics are frequently cited as reasons why individuals avoid advertisements in recent literature. However, as the study's primary focus is on the user, this is not further explored. A more comparative, platform-based research approach would be necessary to examine the technological or structural features of other platforms, which is outside the scope of this study.

2.5 Theoretical Model

The theoretical model depicted in Figure 1 bridges four academic domains: algorithmic personalization, consumptive news feed curation, advertisement avoidance, and the online experience. The model incorporates the idea that according to algorithmic personalization literature, users possess different levels of knowledge and understanding of the algorithms that social media platforms use. Building on this, advertisement avoidance theory exposed three motivations, which are shown in the model as the main reasons for people to start avoiding advertisements. By summarizing advertisement avoidance literature, the three main positive effects of advertisement avoidance were found and incorporated in the model. Lastly, it combines media and communication studies to investigate the real tactics people use and how these affect how users perceive their online experience. Combining these multidisciplinary viewpoints allows the model to capture the intricate relationship between user awareness, news feed curation activity, and outcomes like perceived control and satisfaction, all of which contribute to a better online experience. Understanding users' changing roles as active contributors to the creation of their digital environments is made easier by this integrated approach. Table 1 provides a summary of the hypotheses.
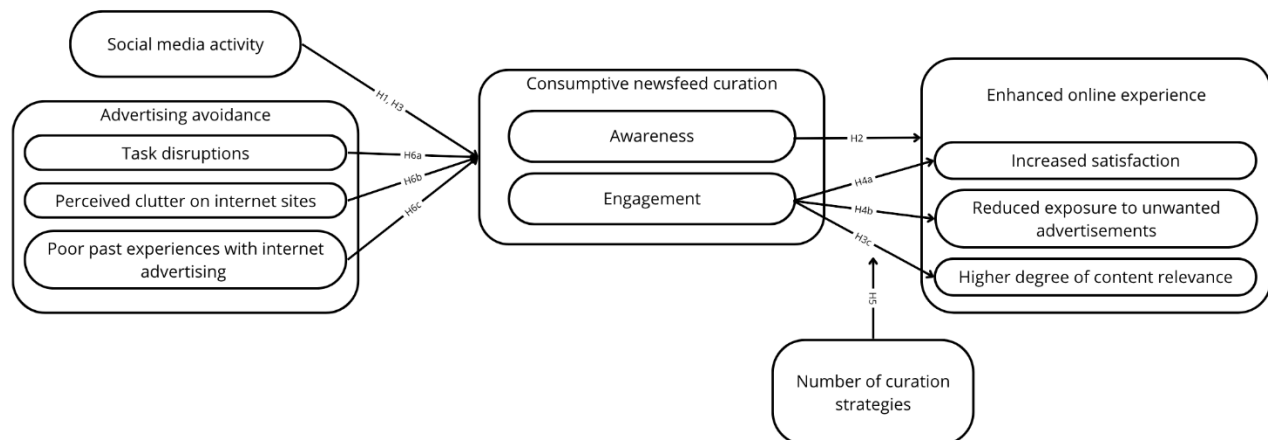
Figure 1: Theoretical Model

Table 1

Overview hypotheses

Hypothesis number	Hypothesis
H1	Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.
H2	Greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation techniques positively affects individuals' overall experience.
H3	Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate higher levels of engagement in consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.
H4a	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to increased satisfaction.
H4b	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to reduced exposure to unwanted advertisements.
H4c	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to a higher degree of content relevance.
H5	The number of curation strategies employed mediates the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and the online experience.
H6a	Task disruptions drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.
H6b	Perceived clutter on internet sites drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.
H6c	Poor past experiences with internet advertising drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The primary goal of this study was to examine the extent to which individuals were aware of consumptive news feed curation, the methods they used to avoid irrelevant or uninteresting advertisements, and the impact these practices had on their overall online experience.

To study these behaviours, a cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allowed for systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns and relationships (Mohajan, 2020). A survey was selected to gain in-depth insights into social media users' behaviour and experiences with news feed curation and advertisement avoidance. Data was collected at a single point in time using a structured survey. The participants were asked questions about their demographic information, their level of awareness and engagement in curating their news feeds, their efforts to avoid advertisements, and their overall online experience.

3.2 Procedure

To guarantee the clarity and understandability of the survey, a pre-test was carried out with a group of initial participants. The pre-test involved multiple volunteers who were asked to complete the survey and provided feedback on its content, structure, and language. Eight participants completed the pre-test, yielding useful comments that enhanced the clarity and accuracy of the survey. Minor modifications were made to question phrasing and answer possibilities based on this information to provide a more user-friendly and reliable final survey. A summary of the pre-test results can be found in Appendix C.

After the feedback of the pre-test was incorporated, the final survey was conducted. At the beginning of the survey, participants were presented with a consent form and an explanation of the concepts. This is included in Appendix A.

The survey began with demographic questions, including age, gender, time spent on social media, and educational level. This was followed by a series of questions related to the awareness of consumptive news feed curation, whether they actively engaged in it, their use of advertising avoidance tactics, and the impact of these tactics on their online experience.

A variety of question formats were used throughout the survey to ensure a thorough examination of the concepts. A combination of multiple-choice, Likert scale and open-ended

questions was used. Joshi et al. (2015) assert that the Five-Point Likert Scale is one of the most fundamental and frequently employed psychometric instruments in social and educational sciences research. In terms of neutrality, the use of a symmetric scale enables respondents to select responses in a balanced and symmetrical manner in either direction, thereby preventing the distortion of results (Joshi et al., 2015). To ensure that no answer possibilities were overlooked, certain open-ended answer options were incorporated. The survey questions are outlined in Appendix A. In total, the survey contained 21 questions.

3.3 Measures

The survey started by examining the origin of the process that motivated users to begin curating their news feeds due to the annoyance of irrelevant advertisements. The degree of advertisement avoidance was measured using several items from the framework developed by Cho & Cheon (2004), which identified three factors that led to advertisement avoidance: perceived goal impediment, perceived ad clutter, and prior negative experience.

Next, the awareness of consumptive news feed curation was measured among the participants using a combination of questions gathered from the literature. Initially, participants were asked about their awareness regarding the ability to curate their social media news feed (Min, 2019). This was followed by items assessing whether participants were familiar with the strategies to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements (Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Merten, 2020).

To capture the depth of user understanding, participants were also asked to describe their role in shaping their own news feeds, and to identify the activities they believed influenced the order of posts presented or the type of content that they found on their news feeds (Powers, 2017; Swart, 2021).

The next section measured whether users actively engaged in consumptive news feed curation. In this part of the study participants were questioned about the actions that they performed to avoid advertisements (Min, 2019; Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Merten, 2020).

In addition, they were also encouraged to explain whether they found themselves actively trying to avoid advertisements (Lee et al., 2019). To further assess engagement, this study aimed to examine the extent to which participants actively pursued a news feed that was perceived as relevant, engaging, and newsworthy (Swart, 2021).

Following the assessment of engagement, the survey proceeded to examine whether participants' actively avoided advertisements. Again, the work of Cho & Cheon (2004) served as the foundation, with several items adapted to measure the extent of advertisement avoidance. These items were chosen because they build on and expand the well-known work of Elliott and Speck (1998).

Lastly, the survey assessed participants' overall online experience. This was assessed using a combination of the measures adapted from Cho & Cheon (2004), Kelly et al. (2010) and Swart (2021). Items focused on whether users were content with their news feed and whether this improved since they started curating their news feeds. The enhanced experience was measured by increased satisfaction, less irrelevant advertisements and a more relevant news feed which was adopted from the work of Cho & Cheon (2004). The measures are summarised in Appendix B.

3.4 Sampling & Participants

Participants in this study were recruited through purposeful and snowball sampling, with an emphasis on those who frequently used social media platforms and participated in news feed curation activities. To capture a variety of perspectives, the sample consisted of individuals who differed in age, gender, educational level, and digital literacy. However, the primary emphasis was on the younger generation, who are highly engaged in social media and hence exhibit a higher awareness of curation tactics according to the literature.

In total, 292 valid responses were gathered. Of the participants, 76% identified as male, 23% as female and 1% preferred not to specify their gender.

With age ranges spanning from 18 to 75 years old, the participation demographic was even more diverse. When the age distribution was analysed, it revealed that 206 participants (71%) were between the ages of 15 and 29. A total of 40 respondents (14%) belonged to the 30–45 age range. In addition, 45 participants (15%) were between the ages of 46 and 64. Lastly, 1 participant (0%) were between the ages of 65 and 99. Although most respondents were young individuals, the survey encompassed a variety of age groups, thereby enabling examinations across many generations.

Analysing the individuals' level of education, 17 participants (6%) completed elementary school, whereas 64 participants (22%) completed high school. 115 participants (40%) graduated from MBO, while an additional 53 participants (20%) graduated from HBO. Lastly, 25 participants

(9%) possessed a university degree, and 18 participants (6%) opted not to disclose their level of education.

In terms of digital literacy, 12 participants (4%) identified themselves as beginners. Almost half of all respondents, 140 participants (48%) identified themselves as intermediate and 117 participants (40%) identified themselves as advanced. Lastly, only 23 participants (8%) identified themselves as experts in digital literacy.

This broad demographic representation of the participant pool, encompassing gender, age, educational level, and digital literacy contributed to the generalizability of the study and facilitated an exhaustive investigation of the research inquiries across multiple segments of society. The demographics of the participants are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of respondents

	Count	Percentage
Age		
15-29 years	206	71%
30-45 years	40	14%
46-64 years	45	15%
65-99 years	1	0%
Gender		
Male	221	76%
Female	68	23%
Prefer not to say	3	1%
Educational level		
Elementary school	17	6%
High school	64	22%
MBO (Dutch Vocational Education)	115	40%
University of Applied Sciences (HBO)	53	20%

Table 2 (continued)

Demographics of respondents

Bachelor's degree at University (WO)	13	5%
Master's degree at University (WO)	12	4%
Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD)	0	0%
Prefer not to say	18	6%
Digital literacy		
Beginner	12	4%
Intermediate	140	48%
Advanced	117	40%
Expert	23	8%

3.5 Data Collection

The main objective for collecting quantitative data was to investigate the awareness, use and effects of consumptive news feed curation practices among social media users. This was investigated with the help of a survey. The selection of an online survey was based on its ability to accurately represent the characteristics of a large population and its ease of participation (Boeije, 2009).

Furthermore, participants are permitted to participate in surveys anonymously, which enables them to be as open as possible. This likely provided more valuable and insightful information. One limitation of using an online survey was that it was impossible to observe the emotions of the participants, which might have provided more detailed information (Boeije, 2009; Razina, 2021).

3.6 Data Analysis

The analysis of quantitative data was conducted using the R programming language. R is frequently utilized by academics from a variety of areas due to its broad range of applications (Weston & Yee, 2017).

To test H1 and H3 a Spearman's rank correlation test was used. The Spearman's rank correlation test is a non-parametric test which measures the strength and direction of association between two variables based on their ranks. Unlike Pearson's correlation, it does not require the data to be normally distributed or measured on an interval scale, making it suitable for ordinal or non-normally distributed data (De Winter et al., 2016; Culyer, 2014). In this case, the Spearman's rank correlation test was employed because social media engagement was an ordinal variable, and awareness of news feed curation was calculated as a continuous composite score. The composite score was calculated by averaging the responses to the following statements: "I am aware that you can change the content on your social media news feed", "I believe I have a significant role in shaping my own news feed", "I have control over the types of advertisements I see on social media platforms". Other questions were left out because they did not strengthen the composite score. To ensure that the variables were internally consistent and that the composite awareness variable truly reflects awareness, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted.

H2 was tested using a simple linear regression. The simple linear regression models the relationship between a single predictor (awareness of consumptive news feed curation) and a single outcome (overall online experience) using a straight line (Marill, 2004). A composite variable that was the sum of multiple variables was used to measure the overall online experience. The variables used to create the composite score are listed in Appendix D. To ensure that the variables were internally consistent and that the composite awareness variable truly reflects the online experience, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted.

H4a to H4c was investigated using ordinal regression analysis to determine the association between consumptive news feed curation (independent variable) and satisfaction, exposure to unwanted advertisements, and perceived content relevance (dependent variables). Ordinal regression is a statistical approach used when the outcome variable is categorical with a natural order, but the distances between categories are not necessarily equal (Gogtay & Thatte, 2017).

H5 was examined using a mediation analysis to see if the mediator (number of curation strategies) transmitted the effect of awareness/engagement on online experience. Mediation

analysis seeks to divide a treatment's total effect into direct effects (not through the mediator) and indirect effects (via the mediator) (Celli, 2021).

      H6a to H6c were tested using ordinal logistic regression analysis. This method of analysis was employed because the variable whether users curate their news feed to prevent adverts was recoded as an ordinal numeric variable.

4. Results

4.1 Social Media Activity and Awareness of News feed Curation

H1: *Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.*

Table 3

Summary H1

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Test method	ρ (rho)	p-value	Result
Social Media Frequency	Awareness Composite Score	Spearman Correlation	0.13	0.026	Supported

H1 was tested using a Spearman's correlation test. A composite variable was created to measure awareness of consumptive news feed curation. To ensure that the variables were internally consistent and that the composite awareness variable truly reflects awareness, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted. This produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.57, which is below the threshold of 0.70 which is often used (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). However, several researchers have argued that in exploratory research, alpha values between 0.50 and 0.60 can be seen as acceptable (Schmitt, 1996). Given the exploratory nature of the study, the scale was retained for further analysis.

A statistically significant positive connection between the two variables was found by the Spearman's correlation test, with a p-value of 0.026. Accordingly, increased use of social media leads to a heightened awareness of consumptive news feed curation. Therefore, H1 is supported by the data.

4.2 Awareness of News feed Curation and the Online Experience

H2: Greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation techniques positively affects individuals' overall experience.

Table 4

Summary H2

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Test method	β (Beta)	p-value	R²	Result
Awareness Composite Score	Overall Online Experience	Linear Regression	2.23	< .001	0.095	Supported

H2 was tested by using a linear regression. To measure the overall experience of respondents, a composite variable was constructed based on multiple questions. To test the internal consistency of the variables in the composite variable, a Cronbach's alpha test was used. This resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81, which is above the threshold of 0.70 and thus significant (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

To test H2, a simple linear regression was conducted which revealed a strong positive relationship between awareness of consumptive news feed curation and the overall online experience of respondents with $p < .001$. The model explained approximately 9.5% of the variance in online experience ($R^2 = 0.095$). This indicated that more awareness of consumptive news feed curation resulted in a better online experience. Therefore, H2 is supported by the data.

4.3 Social Media Activity and Engagement in News feed Curation

H3: Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate higher levels of engagement in consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.

Table 5

Summary H3

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Test method	ρ (rho)	p-value	Result
Social Media Frequency	Consumptive News feed Curation	Spearman Correlation	-0.003	0.958	Not Supported

H3 was tested using the Spearman's correlation test. The test resulted in a p value of 0.958, indicating that the relationship is neither statistically significant nor practically meaningful.

Therefore, H3 is not supported by the data, implying that more active social media users do not necessarily demonstrate higher levels of engagement in consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.

4.4 Effects of Consumptive News feed Curation

H4a: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to increased satisfaction.
H4b: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to reduced exposure to unwanted advertisements.
H4c: Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to a higher degree of content relevance.

Table 6

Summary hypothesis H4a, H4b, and H4c

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Test method	β (Beta)	p-value	Result
H4a	Engagement news feed curation	Increased Satisfaction	Ordinal logistic regression	0.124	0.082	Weak Support
H4b	Engagement news feed curation	Reduced Exposure to Unwanted Advertisements	Ordinal logistic regression	0.131	0.064	Weak Support
H4c	Engagement news feed curation	Increased Content Relevance	Ordinal logistic regression	0.180	0.011	Supported

To evaluate H4a, H4b, and H4c, an ordinal logistic regression was used to determine whether engaging in consumptive news feed curation enhanced satisfaction, reduced exposure to unwanted advertisements, and improved perceived content relevancy.

The results for H4a demonstrated a small positive effect ($\beta = 0.124$, $p = .082$). However, the effect is not statistically significant because the p-value is higher than 0.05. Therefore, H4a is not supported by the data.

The results for H4b demonstrated a small positive effect ($\beta = 0.131$, $p = .064$). Nevertheless, this effect is not statistically significant. Therefore, H4b is not supported by the data.

In contrast, consumptive news feed curation was shown to have a statistically significant positive impact on perceived content relevancy. The findings of the test were statistically

significant, with β = 0.180 and p =.011. Therefore, H4c is supported by the data. This suggests that people who curated their news feed more regularly saw the items in their feed to be more relevant.

4.5 Impact of Number of Curation Strategies on the Online Experience

H5: The number of curation strategies employed mediates the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and the online experience.

Table 7

Summary H5

Effect	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	p-value	Interpretation
ACME (indirect effect)	0.024	-0.019	0.10	0.356	Not significant
ADE (direct effect)	0.378	-0.118	0.81	0.106	Not significant
Total effect	0.402	-0.095	0.86	0.098	Not significant
Proportion mediated	6.05%	-24.46%	49%	0.378	Small & not significant

A mediation analysis was used to examine whether the number of curation strategies mediated the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and the online experience.

The indirect effect (ACME) was not statistically significant and was minor, according to the data (p = 0.356). This meant that simply using more curation strategies did not appear to be the mechanism through which engagement improved the user experience. A possible explanation might be that the type of strategy mattered more than the number of strategies used.

Additionally, the direct effect (ADE) was not statistically significant and was minor (p = 0.106). Consumptive news feed curation had a nearly substantial overall impact on the online experience, but the percentage of the effect that was mediated was only 6.05% and not statistically significant (p = 0.378).

Therefore, H5 is not supported by the data. This means that the relationship between consumptive news feed curation and online experience is not mediated by the number of curation strategies.

4.6 Reasons to Engage in Consumptive News feed Curation

H6a: Task disruptions drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.
H6b: Perceived clutter on internet sites drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.
H6c: Poor past experiences with internet advertising drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.

Table 8

Summary hypothesis H6a, H6b, H6c

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	β (Beta)	p-value	Result
H6a	Task disruptions	News feed curation to avoid ads	0.785	0.001	Supported
H6b	Perceived clutter	News feed curation to avoid ads	0.197	0.387	Not supported
H6c	Poor past ad experience	News feed curation to avoid ads	0.694	0.014	Supported

As all three hypotheses examined the underlying motivations for users to curate their news feed, the same methodological approach was applied to each one. The hypotheses were tested using a logistic regression analysis to see if perceived clutter, task disruptions, and negative prior experiences with online ads predicted news feed curation to avoid ads.

Results for H6a demonstrated a significant but small positive effect of task disruptions on news feed curation engagement, $\beta = 0.785$, $p = .001$, The p-value is lower than 0.05 and therefore, H6a is supported by the data.

Results for H6b showed that the effect of perceived clutter on news feed curation was small and not statistically significant, $\beta = 0.197$, $p = .387$. Therefore, H6b is not supported by the data.

For H6c, a significant but small positive effect of poor past advertising experiences on news feed curation was found, $\beta = 0.694$, $p = .014$. Therefore, H6c is supported by the data.

4.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 9 provides a summary of the hypotheses and whether they are supported or not supported.

Table 9

Overview hypothesis testing

Hypothesis number	Hypothesis	Supported (✓) or not supported (X)
H1	Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.	✓
H2	Greater awareness of consumptive news feed curation techniques positively affects individuals' overall experience.	✓
H3	Users who are more active on social media will demonstrate higher levels of engagement in consumptive news feed curation compared to less active users.	X
H4a	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to increased satisfaction.	X
H4b	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to reduced exposure to unwanted advertisements.	X
H4c	Engaging in consumptive news feed curation will lead to a higher degree of content relevance.	✓
H5	The number of curation strategies employed mediates the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and the online experience.	X
H6a	Task disruptions drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.	✓
H6b	Perceived clutter on internet sites drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.	X
H6c	Poor past experiences with internet advertising drive people to curate their news feed to avoid advertisements.	✓

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of the Findings

The findings indicate that awareness of consumptive news feed curation is growing, particularly among active social media users. A lot of the respondents indicated awareness of the ability to curate their news feed on social media platforms. Therefore, it is consistent with prior research that individuals who were more active on social media, were more aware of consumptive news feed curation (H1). This is in line with earlier studies by Swart (2021) and Eg et al. (2023), which contend that regular engagement with social media platforms enhances algorithmic literacy. Based on the findings it became clear that most respondents were aware of multiple strategies such as unfollowing, concealing content, or modifying privacy settings, thereby enhancing their knowledge of their impact on content personalization. This is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Familiarity with curation strategies

Curation strategy	Count
Follow or unfollow	196
Like, share or comment	202
See less	151
Change ad preferences	134
None	24

However, it is important to acknowledge that the correlation between the variables was rather small. This supports the findings of Rader and Gray (2015). They found that while usage of social media may increase awareness of news feed curation, it often stays fragmented or shallow. Users are aware that their behaviour on social media affects the content that they see but often lack understanding of the algorithmic operations or the personalization possibilities.

The extent to which this awareness and understanding of consumptive news feed curation also positively contributed to the online experience was tested by H2. The results indicate that increased understanding of news feed curation methods enhanced the overall online experience of participants. The enhanced experience derived from the ability to personalize your news feed aligns with prior findings. It highlights the psychological advantages of control in digital contexts

(Noguti, 2022; Harper et al., 2015). Individuals who believe they may affect the content they encounter are more inclined to experience satisfaction and engagement with social media networks. These findings also reinforce arguments made by König (2022) and Metzler and Garcia (2023), who proposed that greater control over algorithmic curation can mitigate feelings of powerlessness on social media platforms. This suggests that platforms can enhance user satisfaction by simply integrating curation possibilities in the user interface.

However, there is a clear distinction between the awareness of consumptive news feed curation and the actual engagement in consumptive news feed curation. This becomes evident from H3, which is not supported by the data. Despite substantial evidence from prior research indicating that heightened utilization of social media platforms correlates with increased engagement in consumptive news feed curation (Lee et al., 2019; Lu, 2020), this study did not identify a significant relationship between usage frequency and engagement in consumptive news feed curation.

Based on these findings, it becomes clear that knowledge of curation techniques does not inherently lead to user engagement in such practices. This phenomenon might be attributed to consumers perceiving the curation of their feeds as a pointless endeavor in the face of the dominant impact of platform algorithms (Bucher, 2017). Social media platforms offer curation options that may give users a sense of control, but these choices are nonetheless mediated by algorithms whose logic is mainly opaque. This begs the question of whether the perceived control over their news feed is equivalent to real control.

Building on this, the effects of consumptive news feed curation will be evaluated (H4a-H4c). The results partially support the hypotheses regarding the positive effects of consumptive news feed curation on the online experience. H4a was not supported by the data. This means that engaging in consumptive news feed curation did not specifically result in increased satisfaction. Additionally, the results did not support H4b. Respondents did not observe a decrease in their exposure to unwanted advertisements because of curating their newsfeed. This may be attributable to the constraints imposed by social media platforms. Platform monetization and user autonomy are constantly traded off. Although users have influence over their newsfeed, social media algorithms are meant to maximize profits. Users may not fully realize the impact of their curating activities since platforms frequently override personal preferences to satisfy commercial objectives.

What is noticeable, however, is that the engagement in curation was discovered to substantially enhance the relevance of content (H4c). Thus, while curation might not lead to less irrelevant ads, it might lead to more relevant content in general. This can be explained by the fact that regular content is supplied for free and that adverts are a source of income. Because of this, users will most likely have more control over unpaid content than they do over paid content.

These findings align with previous research indicating that curation enables users to tailor their digital environments, leading to more personalized and enjoyable experiences (Noguti, 2022; Kelly et al., 2018). However, the relatively small effect sizes highlight that while curation can improve the online experience, its impact may be limited by external factors such as platform design or advertising algorithms.

H5 examines one of these external factors by assessing whether the number of curation strategies mediates the relationship between engagement in consumptive news feed curation and online experience. Nonetheless, the findings did not support this. The reason for this may be that the quality or intentionality of curation behaviour is more significant than the mere quantity of techniques employed. Another reason why the hypothesis is not supported may be that not all curation procedures are equally effective or significant. Consequently, the quantity of strategies may not entirely reflect the extent of engagement.

Having established the consequences of consumptive news feed curation to avoid irrelevant advertisements, the following section examines the reasons why individuals actively seek to avoid advertisements. This is accomplished by H6a, H6b, and H6c, which all concentrate on the motivations behind individuals' curation of their news feeds to avoid irrelevant advertisements. Based on the data, H6a and H6c were supported. Both task disruption and poor past advertising experiences seemed to be the main reasons why users curate their news feed. This is consistent with Cho and Cheon (2004) and Kelly et al. (2019), who identified task disruption and poor past experiences as key drivers of advertising avoidance. This data further supports prior research (DeVito, 2016; Eslami et al., 2015) which stated that users curate their news feeds reactively, mostly as a defensive strategy against invasive or irrelevant advertisements.

In contrast, H6b was not supported by the findings. This indicates that perceived clutter is not a major factor influencing news feed curation and advertisement avoidance. This phenomenon might be a result of users' growing tolerance for digital clutter. People may not curate their news feeds directly since they can still accomplish their jobs despite digital clutter.

5.2 Theoretical and Practical Implications

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to existing knowledge by investigating the combination of consumptive news feed curation, advertising avoidance and how this shapes the online experience. Because the study is primarily concerned with how users participate in consumptive news feed curation to avoid irrelevant advertisements, it integrates the constructs of consumptive news feed curation and advertisement avoidance rather than considering them separately as done by prior research (Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Su et al., 2022). In doing so, this study enhances the existing research by framing personalisation as a dynamic arena of negotiation, resistance, and user agency rather than merely a service. By integrating algorithmic personalisation and advertising resistance, it provides a comprehensive picture of how people navigate their digital environments in reaction to algorithmic influence and commercial intrusion.

In addition, much of the literature on consumptive news feed curation focuses on how users engage with content personalization possibilities. This study uniquely positions advertising resistance as a motivating force for engagement in consumptive news feed curation. Consequently, it connects two theoretical domains: algorithmic personalization (Bucher, 2016; Rader & Gray, 2015) and advertising resistance (Cho & Cheon, 2004; Kelly et al., 2019), which have typically been examined separately. This indicates that users do not only curate their news feed for satisfaction, but also as a reaction to discomfort or resistance against the algorithm.

Furthermore, the results reveal a strong proportion of people who are not only consumers of algorithmically curated content but are increasingly engaged in actively shaping their own online experience by curating their news feeds. This perspective aligns with emerging theories on algorithmic literacy and user agency (Swart, 2021; Bucher, 2016; König, 2022).

Lastly, the findings show a new way of looking at algorithmic literacy. Based on prior research, it was often assumed that literacy led to action, and thus engagement (Swart, 2021; Pangrazio & Selwyn, 2018). However, based on the results of the study, awareness of consumptive news feed curation does not automatically lead to engagement in consumptive news feed curation. Therefore, future studies should view algorithmic literacy as a multi-dimensional concept that does not only focus on knowledge of algorithms but also encompasses trust in their mechanisms, valuing their results, and confidence to engage with them.

5.2.2 Implications for Platform Design

Besides theoretical implications, the study also offers practical implications for platform designers, marketers, and communication strategists. Initially, it is important to acknowledge that the findings highlight the necessity of augmenting user control over their news feed. It is evident that a significant number of users are currently aware of news feed curation and are actively utilizing it.

Nevertheless, it does not directly result in a higher level of satisfaction according to the findings. A possible reason for this might be the fact that when users curate their news feeds, the results and effects are not directly visible. Curation may improve content quality, yet users may not attribute this improvement to their own actions, thereby limiting perceived satisfaction gains.

Consequently, to enhance user satisfaction, platforms should make the results of users' curation actions more visible. For instance, social media companies may include more obvious curation alternatives or ask users to rate the advertisement after it has been displayed, along with the ability to hide it and other options. In a digital landscape increasingly shaped by algorithms, giving users the tools and knowledge to influence their online experiences may serve as a competitive advantage which improves both user retention and advertisement performance.

Finally, the study underscores a possible gap between platforms and users. Although most platforms provide curation features to enhance the user experience, consumers may lack the knowledge to utilize them successfully. To improve user satisfaction, platforms could emphasise these features within the experience and provide walkthroughs or real-time feedback on results. This research compels platforms to transition from passive personalisation to actively equipping users with clear, actionable, and feedback-oriented curation tools.

5.2.2 Implications for Marketers

From the marketing perspective, the findings indicate a shift in the expectations of users. Prior negative experiences and task disruptions are the most important reason for users to curate their news feed, often with the goal to avoid irrelevant advertisements.

Therefore, marketers should prioritize relevance and contextual sensitivity when targeting social media users. Users not only ignore irrelevant or annoying ads; their active content filtering using news feed curation tools could also cause future ads to be less visible. Instead of relying on broad demographic targeting, marketers should therefore take a shift to use data more efficiently

to only target people that might be interested in their products. This gives them the opportunity to provide interested users with highly relevant content.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

This research presents significant new insights into how users' online experiences are shaped by their awareness of and engagement in the curation of news feeds. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that there are limitations that must be considered.

First, the generalizability of the results may be limited because the sample was primarily composed of young and digitally literate individuals. When individuals are older or less active on social media, they may exhibit other curation behaviours that this study may not fully capture. Therefore, future research could expand the demographic scope to investigate possible differences in curation behaviour among different generations or cultures.

In addition, the study solely focused on how people use consumptive news feed curation to avoid irrelevant advertisements. However, as users filter out irrelevant advertisements, algorithmic systems may change content delivery in broader ways. Therefore, future research could explore how the curation of advertisements influences the visibility and diversity of other types of content. Examining these indirect effects would yield significant insights into the unintended implications of advertisement avoidance and clarify how curations influence the whole informational environment on social media platforms.

Another limitation that should be taken into consideration is the fact that the study fully depended on self-reported measures. The issue with these measurements is that individuals frequently feel forced to provide responses they see as socially desirable. Furthermore, individuals may not accurately recall their behaviour, leading to discrepancies in their responses. Therefore, to substantiate these self-reported measures, future research may incorporate behavioural data.

Another drawback of the study is the evaluation of awareness and involvement in consumptive news feed curation. Even though the study tried to quantify knowledge of and participation in consumptive news feed curation by using both self-reported measures and indicators of method use, both concepts are hard to measure. Not all measurements might possess equal efficacy and summing them up may lead to an oversimplification of the construct. Consequently, further research may explore the creation of a more sophisticated scale to assess awareness and engagement in the curation of consumptive news feeds.

Lastly, it is worth noting that participants of the study were asked about their curation behaviour on social media platforms in general. The study did not choose to focus on a platform solely and therefore platform-specific questions were not used. However, all platforms have their own curation capabilities and varying levels of algorithmic transparency, which consequently affects awareness and engagement. Therefore, future research could concentrate on these specific differences between platforms to investigate the impact of these differences on curation activities.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how user awareness and engagement in consumptive news feed curation, aimed at avoiding irrelevant advertisements, shape their online experience. While greater awareness was linked to improved experience, engagement showed mixed results. The main drivers of curation behaviour were task disruption and negative past experiences with advertisements. Respondents did not consider perceived clutter as an incentive, despite its suggestion in prior studies. Users who effectively curate their news feed experience greater satisfaction and consider their content to be more relevant. Overall, while awareness was notably linked to a better online experience, engagement showed inconsistent impacts, and the number of curation strategies used did not mediate the relationship between awareness and experience. This suggests that how users curate their feeds matters more than how often they do so. In this view, this study advances our understanding of user agency in algorithmic environments and calls for renewed attention to the quality of user-platform interactions in the age of data-driven personalization.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Dear Participant,

This survey is conducted as part of my master's thesis project within the Digital Marketing program at the University of Twente. In this survey, you will be asked several questions about news feed curation and advertisement avoidance. Your responses will be analyzed to understand the awareness and engagement of social media users in consumptive news feed curation to avoid advertisements.

The goal of this research is to provide insights into how social media users use content curation to avoid advertising on social media platforms, and how these interactions impact their overall online experience.

Your answers are crucial for our research. Therefore, we kindly ask you to read each question carefully and provide your honest opinion. The survey will take approximately 10–15 minutes of your time.
All data collected will be processed anonymously, with demographic information gathered solely for analysis and validation purposes. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, it will not be possible to delete data once the survey has been completed and submitted. Participants are free to withdraw from the survey at any time while filling it out.

If you have any questions or want more information about this research, please contact me at b.leferink@student.utwente.nl.

Thank you for your participation!

By ticking the box below, you consent that the information obtained through this survey can be used for the research purposes specified above and confirm that you are at least 18 years old. If you do not want to consent to this or do not meet the age requirement, please tick the "I do not consent" box, and you will be led to the end of the survey.

Concepts Used in the Survey

News feed Curation: News feed curation refers to the process by which users actively select and manage the content that appears in their social media feeds. This can involve following certain people or pages, unfollowing,

or blocking others and adjusting settings to prioritize certain types of content. By curating their news feeds, users can create a personalized online environment that aligns with their interests and preferences, enhancing their overall social media experience.

Advertisement Avoidance: Advertisement avoidance involves the strategies and actions that users take to minimize their exposure to unwanted advertisements on social media platforms. This can include using ad blockers, skipping ads, muting, or hiding ads, and customizing ad preferences.

Awareness: Awareness in this context refers to the extent to which users are conscious of their ability to curate their news feeds and avoid advertisements. It encompasses knowledge about the tools and features available on social media platforms that allow for such customization and the understanding of how these tools can be used to shape their online experience.

Engagement: Engagement refers to the degree of involvement and activity that users exhibit in curating their news feeds and avoiding advertisements. Higher engagement indicates that users are actively taking steps to manage their social media content and interactions, while lower engagement suggests a more passive approach to their online experience.

Experience: Experience pertains to the overall impact of news feed curation and advertisement avoidance on users' satisfaction and enjoyment of social media. It includes factors such as the relevance of content encountered, the frequency of interruptions by ads, and the general feeling of control and customization that users experience while using social media platforms.

Questions

1. What is your gender?

   a. Male

   b. Female

   c. Prefer not to say

2. What is your age? (fill in number)

3. How often do you use social media?

   a. Multiple times a day

   b. Once a day

   c. A few times a week

   d. Once a week

   e. A few times a month

   f. Rarely

4. What social media platforms do you use? Select all that apply

   - Facebook

   - X (Twitter)

   - Instagram

   - Snapchat

   - LinkedIn

   - YouTube

   - Other

5. How would you rate your digital literacy/technical proficiency?

   a. Beginner

   b. Intermediate

   c. Advanced

   d. Expert

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

    a. Elementary school

    b. High school

    c. MBO (Dutch Vocational Education)

    d. University of Applied Sciences (HBO)

    e. Bachelor's degree at University (WO)

    f. Master's degree at University (WO)

    g. Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD)

    h. Prefer not to say

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (strongly agree-strongly disagree)

    -   I am aware that you can change the content on your social media news feed

    -   I have control over the types of advertisements I see on social media platforms.

    -   I believe I have a significant role in shaping my own news feed

8. I am familiar with the following strategies to modify my social media news feed in order to avoid advertisements:

    -   Follow or unfollowed certain people/organizations.

    -   Like, share, or comment on certain types of content.

    -   Indicate that you want to see less of certain people or types of content.

    -   Change privacy settings or ad preferences.

9. In your opinion, how significantly do the following factors influence the content shown on your social media news feed or the sequence in which posts are presented? (not at all – extremely)

    -   Your actions or usage history on social media

    -   Actions your friends or the organizations you follow take on social media

    -   Actions that social media users you do not follow take on social media

    -   Actions taken by social media engineers/editors/curators

10. I actively strive for the most relevant, interesting, or newsworthy social media news feed possible.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

11. I actively try to avoid advertisements on social media

- Never
- Sometimes
- About half the time
- Most of the time
- Always

12. I curate my news feed to avoid advertisements on social media

- Multiple times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Rarely

13. Which of the following actions have you ever taken to influence what advertisements appear in your social media news feed?

- Follow or unfollowed certain people/organizations.
- Liked, shared, or commented on certain types of content.
- Indicated that you wanted to see less of certain people or types of content.
- Changed your privacy settings or ad preferences.
- Other, which?

14. I found this strategy to be effective in avoiding unwanted advertisements on social media (strongly disagree – strongly agree)
    - Using ad-blocking software
    - Reporting or hiding ads
    - Customizing account settings to limit ads
    - Following specific accounts or pages
    - Unfollowing or blocking certain users who share ads

15. Why do you curate your news feed to avoid advertisements? Select all that apply
    - To minimize interruptions to my tasks or focus
    - To minimize perceived clutter on internet sites
    - Poor past experiences with internet advertising
    - Privacy concerns
    - To ensure the content in my news feed is more relevant to my interests
    - To regain control over the content on my news feed
    - Other (text entry)

16. I am usually pleased with the results when I click on social media ads.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

17. Ever since I started carefully selecting the content that appears on my social media news feed, my level of satisfaction has increased.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

18. The advertisements on my news feed are relevant to me.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

19. Since I began carefully curating the content displayed on my social media news feed, I have noticed a decrease in irrelevant advertisements.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

20. Since I began carefully curating the content that shows on my social media news feed, the relevance of the content on my news feed has increased.
    - Strongly disagree
    - Somewhat disagree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Somewhat agree
    - Strongly agree

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (strongly disagree - strongly agree)
    - My enjoyment of social media is enhanced by avoiding advertisements
    - The strategies I employ to evade advertisements are efficient in minimizing disruptions
    - Curating my news feed to avoid advertisements improves my overall online experience

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire Measures

Appendix Table 1

Operationalization concepts

Concept	Question	Source
Demographic information	What is your gender? a. Male b. Female c. Prefer not to say What is your age? (fill in number) How often do you use social media? a. Multiple times a day b. Once a day c. A few times a week d. Once a week e. A few times a month f. Rarely What social media platforms do you use? Select all that apply a. Facebook b. X (Twitter) c. Instagram d. Snapchat e. LinkedIn f. YouTube g. Other How would you rate your digital literacy/technical proficiency? a. Beginner b. Intermediate c. Advanced d. Expert What is the highest level of education you have completed? a. Elementary school b. High school c. MBO (Dutch Vocational Education) d. University of Applied Sciences (HBO) e. Bachelor's degree at University (WO) f. Master's degree at University (WO) g. Doctorate degree (e.g., PhD) h. Prefer not to say	
Awareness	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (strongly agree-strongly disagree) - I am aware that you can change the content on your social media news feed - I have control over the types of advertisements I see on social media platforms. - I believe I have a significant role in shaping my own news feed	(Min, 2019; Swart, 2021)

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Operationalization concepts

Concept	Question	Source

	I am familiar with the following strategies to modify my social media news feed in order to avoid advertisements:
	  - Follow or unfollowed certain people/organizations.
	  - Like, share, or comment on certain types of content.
	  - Indicate that you want to see less of certain people or types of content.
	  - Change privacy settings or ad preferences.
		(Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Merten, 2020)

	In your opinion, how significantly do the following factors influence the content shown on your social media news feed or the sequence in which posts are presented?
	  1. Your actions or usage history on social media
	  2. Actions your friends or the organizations you follow take on social media
	  3. Actions that social media users you do not follow take on social media
	  4. Actions taken by social media engineers/editors/curators
		(Powers, 2017)

Engagement	I actively strive for the most relevant, interesting, or newsworthy social media news feed possible.
	  1. Strongly disagree
	  2. Somewhat disagree
	  3. Neither agree nor disagree
	  4. Somewhat agree
	  5. Strongly agree
		(Swart, 2021)

	I actively try to avoid advertisements on social media
	  1. Never
	  2. Sometimes
	  3. About half the time
	  4. Most of the time
	  5. Always	

	I curate my news feed to avoid advertisements on social media
	  1. Multiple times a day
	  2. Once a day
	  3. A few times a week
	  4. Once a week
	  5. A few times a month
	  6. Rarely
		(Min, 2019)

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Operationalization concepts

Concept	Question	Source
	Which of the following actions have you ever taken to influence what advertisements appear in your social media news feed? 1. Follow or unfollowed certain people/organizations. 2. Liked, shared, or commented on certain types of content. 3. Indicated that you wanted to see less of certain people or types of content. 4. Changed your privacy settings or ad preferences. 5. Other, which? I found this strategy to be effective in avoiding unwanted advertisements on social media (strongly disagree – strongly agree) - Using ad-blocking software - Reporting or hiding ads - Customizing account settings to limit ads - Following specific accounts or pages - Unfollowing or blocking certain users who share ads	(Lu, 2020; Lee et al., 2019; Merten, 2020)
Advertisement avoidance	Why do you curate your news feed to avoid advertisements? Select all that apply - To minimize interruptions to my tasks or focus - To minimize perceived clutter on internet sites - Poor past experiences with internet advertising - Privacy concerns - To ensure the content in my news feed is more relevant to my interests - To regain control over the content on my news feed - Other (text entry)	(Cho & Cheon, 2004)
	I am usually pleased with the results when I click on social media ads. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat agree 5. Strongly agree	(Cho & Cheon, 2004)
	Ever since I started carefully selecting the content that appears on my social media news feed, my level of satisfaction has increased. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat agree 5. Strongly agree	(Cho & Cheon, 2004)

Appendix Table 1 (continued)

Operationalization concepts

Concept	Question	Source
	The advertisements on my news feed are relevant to me. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat agree 5. Strongly agree	(Kelly et al., 2010)
	Since I began carefully curating the content displayed on my social media news feed, I have noticed a decrease in irrelevant advertisements. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat agree 6. Strongly agree	(Cho & Cheon, 2004)
	Since I began carefully curating the content that shows on my social media news feed, the relevance of the content on my news feed has increased. 1. Strongly disagree 2. Somewhat disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Somewhat agree 6. Strongly agree	(Cho & Cheon, 2004)
	To what extent do you agree with the following statements? - My enjoyment of social media is enhanced by avoiding advertisements - The strategies I employ to evade advertisements are efficient in minimizing disruptions - Curating my news feed to avoid advertisements improves my overall online experience	

Appendix C: Results Pre-Test

In total, eight people successfully participated in the pre-test. The feedback yielded significant insights that were enhanced prior to disseminating the actual survey.

At first, a participant stated that question 19 and question 20 were quite familiar. However, one question specifically pertains to advertising, while the other pertains to the overall material displayed on your news feed. Therefore, this question was left unchanged.

Secondly, participants mentioned that there were some statements that might need to be clarified. For example, the statement "My experience with clicking social media ads is very satisfactory" was found to be vague. Therefore, this statement was rephrased to "I am usually pleased with the results when I click on social media ads".

Additionally, three respondents reported that a statement was absent. This was due to an undeleted question. Consequently, the matter was swiftly addressed by removing the available response options.

In addition, there was a participant who stated that some response options might not be clear for everyone. He specifically stated the answering option "content control" for the question "Why do you curate your news feed to avoid advertisements? Select all that apply". To solve this problem the answering option was rephrased to "to regain control over the content on my news feed".

Overall, most participants reported that the survey questions were clear and straightforward. The survey's duration of 10-15 minutes was suitable, and the choices offered allowed for detailed and subtle responses.

Appendix D: Measurement Overall Online Experience

Variable	Question
Content_News feed_Numeric	I am content with my social media news feed
Pleased_Click_Ads_Numeric	I am usually pleased with the results when I click on social media ads
Curation_Rise_Satisfaction_Numeric	Ever since I started carefully selecting the content that appears on my social media news feed, my level of satisfaction has increased
Relevancy_Ads_Numeric	The advertisements on my news feed are relevant to me
Curation_Decrease_Irrelevant_Ads_Numeric	Since I began carefully curating the content displayed on my social media news feed, I have noticed a decrease in irrelevant advertisements
Curation_Increase_Relevance_Content_Numeric	Since I began carefully curating the content that shows on my social media news feed, the relevance of the content on my news feed has increased
Enhanced_Enjoyment_Ad_Avoidance_Numeric	My enjoyment of social media is enhanced by avoiding adverts
Efficiency_Curation_Strategies_Numeric	The strategies I employ to evade advertisements are efficient in minimizing disruptions
Curation_Improves_Experience_Numeric	Curating my news feed to avoid advertisements improves my overall online experience