

Do News Consumers Want Explanations for Personalized News Rankings?

Maartje ter Hoeve, Mathieu Heruer, Daan Odijk, Anne Schuth,
Martijn Spitters, Ron Mulder, Nick van der Wildt, Maarten de Rijke

University of Amsterdam & Blendle

Introduction



Voor jou



Research Questions

R1 Do users want to receive explanations why particular news items are recommended to them?

R2 What way of showing news recommendations do users prefer?

R3 Do users open more articles if we provide explanations of why users see these articles?

R1 R2 User Study

R3 A/B test

Research Questions

R1 Do users want to receive explanations why particular news items are recommended to them?

R2 What way of showing news recommendations do users prefer?

R3 Do users open more articles if we provide explanations of why users see these articles?

R1 R2 User Study

R3 A/B test

Design User Study



Single Reason - Visible

179 sent type 1
180 sent type 2
182 sent type 3



Single Reason - Invisible

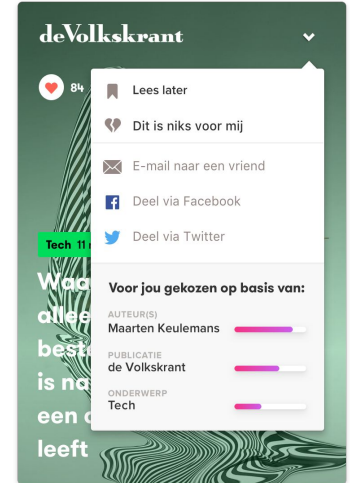
41 answered type 1
36 answered type 2
43 answered type 3



Multiple Reasons - Visible



Multiple Reasons - Combined



Bar chart

R1 Do Users Want Explanations?

- 1 → Op het plaatje hieronder zie je hoe een artikel op Blendle Premium er nu uit ziet. De artikelen die je ziet worden voor je uitgekozen op basis van je persoonlijke voorkeuren en wat je graag leest.

Stel, we zouden je meer informatie geven over waarom we een artikel voor je hebben uitgezocht. Zou je dat nuttig vinden?*



☐ A Ja ☐ B Een beetje ☐ C Nee ☐ D Weet ik niet

User wants reasons	Times answered
Yes	65
Somewhat	24
No	26
I don't know	5

$$\chi^2 = 14.55, p < 0.001$$

R2 Preferences How Explanations Are Shown?



Single Reason - Visible



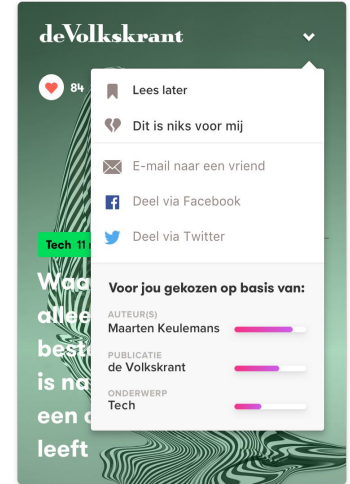
Single Reason - Invisible



Multiple Reasons - Visible



Multiple Reasons - Combined



Bar chart

R2 Preferences How Explanations Are Shown?

Reason type	1		2		3		4		5	
Question	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std	Mean	Std
Transparency	3.697	1.141	3.786	1.129	3.587	1.107	3.873	1.096	3.650	1.339
Sufficiency	3.530	1.076	3.625	1.028	3.333	1.098	3.764	0.953	3.408	1.275
Trust	3.000	1.115	3.250	1.122	3.032	1.023	3.400	0.984	3.500	1.258
Satisfaction	3.606	0.919	3.661	0.969	3.317	1.096	3.582	1.073	3.233	1.327
Average	3.458	0.798	3.580	0.836	3.317	0.916	3.655	0.798	3.448	1.154

Research Questions

R1 Do users want to receive explanations why particular news items are recommended to them?

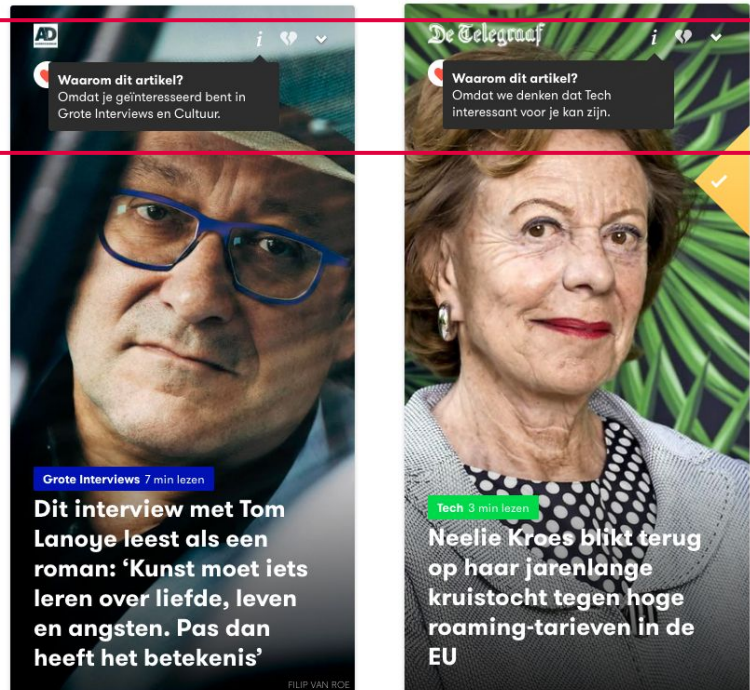
R2 What way of showing news recommendations do users prefer?

R3 Do users open more articles if we provide explanations of why users see these articles?

R1 R2 User Study

R3 A/B test

Design A/B test



Justifications
Heuristic Reasons

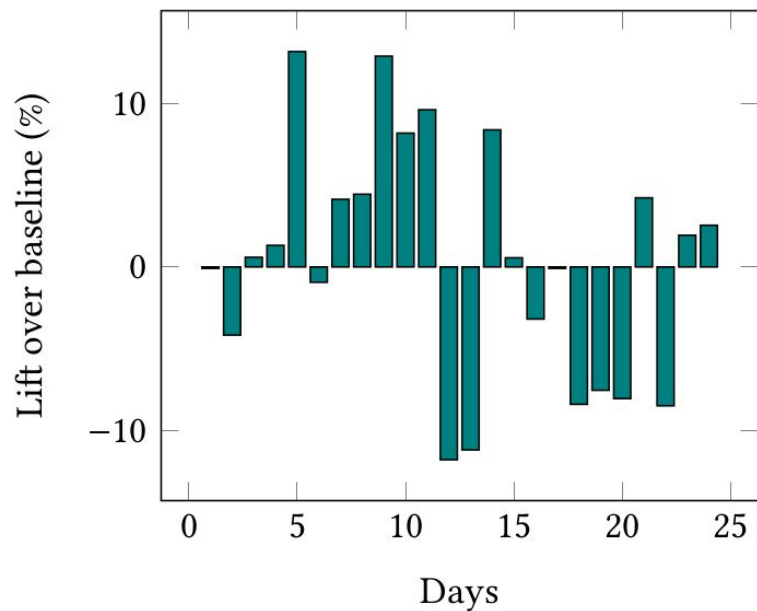
Ran 24 days on 100% of the users

Metric: open rate (the number of reads over the number of users)

number of articles that
are opened by a user
without them asking for
a refund

the number of unique users
that viewed their selection

R3 More Opened Articles if Explanations Shown?



Conclusion

R1 Do users want to receive explanations why particular news items are recommended to them?

Yes

R2 What way of showing news recommendations do users prefer?

No specific one

R3 Do users open more articles if we provide explanations of why users see these articles?

This research does not show this. Users do not see many reasons



Reasons Users See

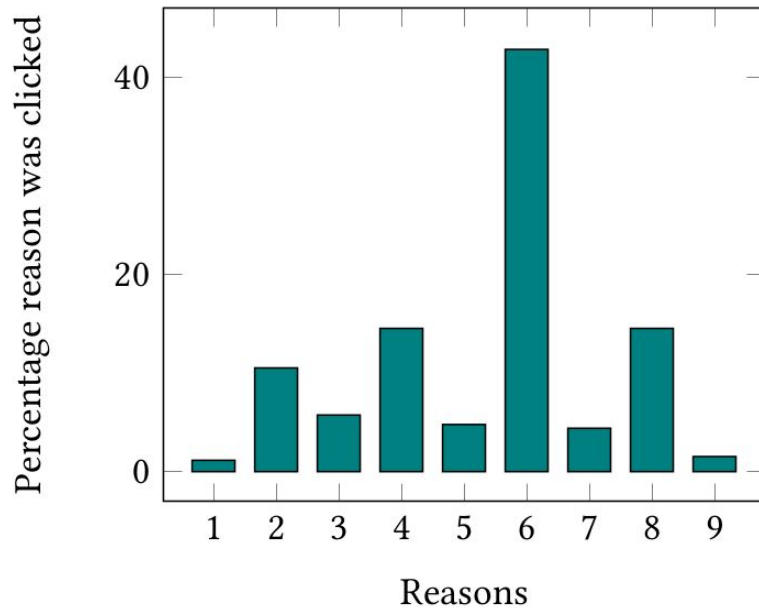


Table 4: Reason mapping for reasons used in A/B test.

Number	Reason
Reason 1	Because you often read about TOPIC
Reason 2	Because you are interested in TOPIC
Reason 3	Because we think NEWSPAPER could be interesting for you
Reason 4	The editors really liked this piece
Reason 5	Because you follow NEWSPAPER
Reason 6	According to the editors, this is one of the best stories of the day. No matter your preferences
Reason 7	Because you often read from NEWSPAPER
Reason 8	Because you seem to like a long read every now and then
Reason 9	Because you often read from AUTHOR