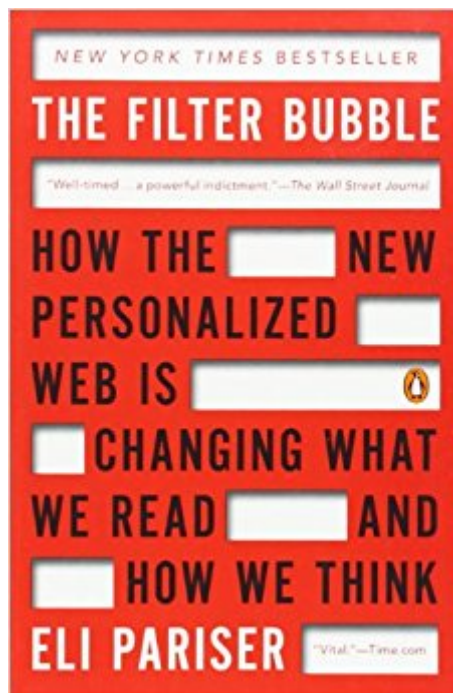The book was found

The Filter Bubble: How The New Personalized Web Is Changing What We Read And How We Think

Synopsis

In December 2009, Google began customizing its search results for all users, and we entered a new era of personalization. With little notice or fanfare, our online experience is changing, as the websites we visit are increasingly tailoring themselves to us. In this engaging and visionary book, MoveOn.org board president Eli Pariser lays bare the personalization that is already taking place on every major website, from Facebook to AOL to ABC News. As Pariser reveals, this new trend is nothing short of an invisible revolution in how we consume information, one that will shape how we learn, what we know, and even how our democracy works. Ã Â The race to collect as much personal data about us as possible, and to tailor our online experience accordingly, is now the defining battle for todayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s internet giants like Google, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft. Behind the scenes, a burgeoning industry of data companies is tracking our personal information to sell to advertisers, from our political leanings to the hiking boots we just browsed on Zappos. Ã Â As a result, we will increasingly each live in our own, unique information universeÃ¢â ¬â •what Pariser calls Ã¢â ¬Å"the filter bubble.Ã¢â ¬Â• We will receive mainly news that is pleasant, familiar and confirms our beliefsÃ¢â ¬â •and since these filters are invisible, we wonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know what is being hidden from us. Our past interests will determine what we are exposed to in the future, leaving less room for the unexpected encounters that spark creativity, innovation and the democratic exchange of ideas.Ã Â Drawing on interviews with both cyber-skeptics and cyber-optimists, from the co-founder of OK Cupid, an algorithmically-driven dating website, to one of the chief visionaries of U.S. information warfare, THE FILTER BUBBLE Ã Â tells the story of how the Internet, a medium built around the open flow ofÃ Â ideas, is closing in on itself under the pressure of commerce and Ã¢â ¬Å"monetization.Ã¢â ¬Â• It peeks behind the curtain at the server farms, algorithms, and geeky entrepreneurs that have given us this new reality, and investigates the consequences of corporate power in the digital age. Ã Â THE FILTER BUBBLE reveals how personalization could undermine the internetÃ¢â ¬â„¢s original purpose as an open platform for the spread of ideas, and leave us all in an isolated, echoing world. But it is not too late to change course. Pariser lays out a new vision for the web, one that embraces the benefits of technology without turning a blind eye to its negative consequences, and will ensure that the Internet lives up to its transformative promise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Author Q&A with Eli Pariser   Q: What is a Ã¢â ¬Å"Filter BubbleÃ¢â ¬Â•?   A: WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢re
used to thinking of the Internet like an enormous library, with services like Google providing a
universal map. But thatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s no longer really the case. Sites from Google and Facebook to
Yahoo News and the New York Times are now increasingly personalized Ã¢â ¬â œ based on your
web history, they filter information to show you the stuff they think you want to see. That can be very
different from what everyone else sees Ã¢â ¬â œ or from what we need to see.   Your filter bubble
is this unique, personal universe of information created just for you by this array of personalizing
filters. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s invisible and itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s becoming more and more difficult to escape.   Q: I like
the idea that websites might show me information relevant to my interestsÃ¢â ¬â •it can be
overwhelming how much information is available I already only watch TV shows and listen to radio
programs that are known to have my same political leaning. WhatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s so bad about this?   A:
ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s true: WeÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve always selected information sources that accord with our own
views. But one of the creepy things about the filter bubble is that weÃ¢â ¬â„¢re not really doing the
selecting. When you turn on Fox News or MSNBC, you have a sense of what their editorial
sensibility is: Fox isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t going to show many stories that portray Obama in a good light, and
MSNBC isnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t going to the ones that portray him badly. Personalized filters are a different
story: You donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know who they think you are or on what basis theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢re showing
you what theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢re showing. And as a result, you donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t really have any sense of
whatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s getting edited out Ã¢â ¬â œ or, in fact, that things are being edited out at all.   Q:
How does money fit into this picture?   A: The rush to build the filter bubble is absolutely driven by
commercial interests. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s becoming clearer and clearer that if you want to have lots of

people use your website, you need to provide them with personally relevant information, and if you want to make the most money on ads, you need to provide them with relevant ads. This has triggered a personal information gold rush, in which the major companies Ã¢â¬â œ Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo, and the like Ã¢â¬â œ are competing to create the most comprehensive portrait of each of us to drive personalized products. ThereÃ¢â¬â„¢s also a whole Ã¢â¬Å"behavior marketÃ¢â¬Â• opening up in which every action you take online Ã¢â¬â œ every mouse click, every form entry Ã¢â¬â œ can be sold as a commodity.   Q: What is the Internet hiding from me?   A: As Google engineer Jonathan McPhie explained to me, itÃ¢â¬â„¢s different for every person Ã¢â¬â œ and in fact, even Google doesnÃ¢â¬â„¢t totally know how it plays out on an individual level. At an aggregate level, they can see that people are clicking more. But they canÃ¢â¬â„¢t predict how each individualÃ¢â¬â„¢s information environment is altered.   In general, the things that are most likely to get edited out are the things youÃ¢â¬â„¢re least likely to click on. Sometimes, this can be a real service Ã¢â¬â œ if you never read articles about sports, why should a newspaper put a football story on your front page? But apply the same logic to, say, stories about foreign policy, and a problem starts to emerge. Some things, like homelessness or genocide, arenÃ¢â¬â„¢t highly clickable but are highly important.   Q: Which companies or Websites are personalizing like this?   A: In one form or another, nearly every major website on the Internet is flirting with personalization. But the one that surprises people most is Google. If you and I Google the same thing at the same time, we may get very different results. Google tracks hundreds of Ã¢â¬Å"signalsÃ¢â¬Â• about each of us Ã¢â¬â œ what kind of computer weÃ¢â¬â„¢re on, what weÃ¢â¬â„¢ve searched for in the past, even how long it takes us to decide what to click on Ã¢â¬â œ and uses it to customize our results. When the result is that our favorite pizza parlor shows up first when we Google pizza, itÃ¢â¬â„¢s useful. But when the result is that we only see the information that is aligned with our religious or social or political beliefs, itÃ¢â¬â„¢s difficult to maintain perspective.   Q: Are any sites being transparent about their personalization?   A: Some sites do better than others. , for example, is often quite transparent about the personalization it does: Ã¢â¬Å"WeÃ¢â¬â„¢re showing you Brave New World because you bought 1984.Ã¢â¬Â• But itÃ¢â¬â„¢s one thing to personalize products and another to personalize whole information flows, like Google and Facebook are doing. And very few users of those services are even marginally aware that this kind of filtering is at work.   Q: Does this issue of personalization impact my privacy or jeopardize my identity at all?   A: Research psychologists have known for a while that the media you consume shapes your identity. So when the media you consume is also shaped by your identity, you can slip into a weird feedback loop. A lot of people see a simple version of this on

Facebook: You idly click on an old classmate, Facebook reads that as a friendship, and pretty soon youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re seeing every one of John or SueÃ¢â ¬â„¢s posts. Gone awry, personalization can create compulsive media Ã¢â ¬â œ media targeted to appeal to your personal psychological weak spots. You can find yourself eating the equivalent of information junk food instead of having a more balanced information diet. Q: You make it clear that while most WebsitesÃ¢â ¬â„¢ user agreements say they wonÃ¢â ¬â„¢t share our personal information, they also maintain the right to change the rules at any time. Do you foresee sites changing those rules to profit from our online personas? A: They already have. Facebook, for example, is notorious for its bait-and-switch tactics when it comes to privacy. For a long time, what you Ã¢â ¬Å"LikedÃ¢â ¬Â• on Facebook was private, and the site promised to keep it that way. Then, overnight, they made that information public to the world, in order to make it easier for their advertisers to target specific subgroups. ThereÃ¢â ¬â„¢s an irony in the fact that while Rolex needs to get Tom CruiseÃ¢â ¬â„¢s permission to put his face on a billboard, it doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t need to get my permission to advertise my endorsement to my friends on Facebook. We need laws that give people more rights in their personal data. Q: Is there any way to avoid this personalization? What if IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m not logged into a site? A: Even if youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re not logged into Google, for example, an engineer told me there are 57 signals that the site uses to figure out who you are: whether youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re on a Mac or PC or iPad, where youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re located when youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re Googling, etc. And in the near future, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢ll be possible to Ã¢â ¬Å"fingerprintÃ¢â ¬Â• unique devices, so that sites can tell which individual computer youÃ¢â ¬â„¢re using. ThatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s why erasing your browser cookies is at best a partial solutionÃ¢â ¬â •it only partially limits the information available to personalizers. What we really need is for the companies that power the filter bubble to take responsibility for the immense power they now have Ã¢â ¬â œ the power to determine what we see and donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t see, what we know and donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t know. We need them to make sure we continue to have access to public discourse and a view of the common good. A world based solely on things we Ã¢â ¬Å"LikeÃ¢â ¬Â• is a very incomplete world. IÃ¢â ¬â„¢m optimistic that they can. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s worth remembering that newspapers werenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t always informed by a sense of journalistic ethics. They existed for centuries without it. It was only when critics like Walter Lippman began to point out how important they were that the newspapers began to change. And while journalistic ethics arenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t perfect, because of them we have been better informed over the last century. We need algorithmic ethics to guide us through the next. Q: What are the business leaders at Google and Facebook and Yahoo saying about their responsibilities? A: To be honest, theyÃ¢â ¬â„¢re frustratingly coy. They tend to frame the trend in the passive tense:

Google's Eric Schmidt recently said "It will be very hard for people to watch or consume something that has not in some sense been tailored for them," rather than "Google is making it very hard…" Mark Zuckerberg perfectly summed up the tension in personalization when he said "A squirrel dying in your front yard may be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa." But he refuses to engage with what that means at a societal level — especially for the people in Africa.   Q: Your background is as a political organizer for the liberal Website MoveOn.org. How does that experience inform your book?   A: I've always believed the Internet could connect us all together and help create a better, more democratic world. That's what excited me about MoveOn — here we were, connecting people directly with each other and with political leaders to create change.   But that more democratic society has yet to emerge, and I think it's partly because while the Internet is very good at helping groups of people with like interests band together (like MoveOn), it's not so hot at introducing people to different people and ideas. Democracy requires discourse and personalization is making that more and more elusive.   And that worries me, because we really need the Internet to live up to that connective promise. We need it to help us solve global problems like climate change, terrorism, or natural resource management which by their nature require massive coordination, and great wisdom and ingenuity. These problems can't be solved by a person or two — they require whole societies to participate. And that just won't happen if we're all isolated in a web of one.

  "Well-timed…a powerful indictment of the current system." — THE WALL STREET JOURNAL"Eli Pariser is no enemy of the Internet. The 30-year-old online organizer is the former executive director and now board president of the online liberal political group MoveOn.org. But while Pariser understands the influence of the Internet, he also knows the power of online search engines and social networks to control exactly how we get information—for good and for ill." — TIME Magazine"[An] important new inquiry into the dangers of excessive personalization… entertaining… provocative." — THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW"Fascinating…a compelling deep-dive into the invisible algorithmic editing on the web, a world where we're being shown more of what algorithms think we want to see and less of what we should see." — ATLANTIC.COM"Pariser's vision of the Internet's near future is compelling." — THE BOSTON GLOBE"Chilling." — THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS

This books feels much more timely and urgent given the results of the 2016 US presidential election. The main thesis, that personalization of the internet is 1) far more all-encompassing than we would like to to believe and 2) has downstream consequences in how we organize our views on the world is very intriguing and the author promotes a very compelling concern regarding these issues. However, I really wish this book had been edited more tightly. His writing style is very scatterbrained and it almost feels like he was rushing to write this whole work during a frenzied weekend at a coffee shop. For example, he has a chapter that spans ideas from Popper and Dostevesky, follows up the next chapter with a cold opener about B2 stealth bomber, and follows it pro-Iraq war propaganda. Mr. Pariser has annoying habit of restating his main thesis ad nausem as if this makes his case more true (Spoiler alert: it doesn't). Finally, the final chapters of the book are a real drag where he does a lot of speculating into what personalization in the future might look like. There certainly are passages that are very intriguing (specifically the ones involving how companies like Facebook and Google gather big data), but overall, I was really expecting more from this work.

Want to know why all your liberal friends lost their marbles when Trump won? Want to know why us Bernie people living in "red" states saw this coming for months? You live in a filter bubble. Read this book and break out of your own personal filter bubble to see what is really going on in the world.

Most of us who are perceptive already kind of know about the Bubble each of us gets in on the Internet (each person seeing a reflection of what the Internet agents like Google think you want to see), but this takes it to a whole new level of understanding. This is a must read for anybody who wants to know where our world is headed, especially if you're involved in marketing and communicating anything on the Internet. The author's grasp of and knowledge of what's going on is impressive. And it's scary. He illuminates the infrastructure of companies and technologies which are recording everything we do online and selling it to the highest bidder. And then then technologies that are used to shape the world we see in terms of what's trending, what's important, and also how you interpret events and trends as the gatekeepers decide which version of the facts and commentary we see. And some of the emerging trends such as personalizing headlines in major publications, and nuances of so many other things is staggering.The author also gives his opinion on what this means across a host of environments such as politics, news, entertainment, education, etc. Just wait for the next election!The book started to become a little repetitive about 2/3 of the way in, and then at the end, as in so many books, really failed to engage me in a solution. I

think because the solution is so obvious, but so difficult....get more people involved, the idea being that there are hundreds of millions of us regular people whereas most of the benefit of the direction of this trend is towards the rich and powerful and we need to to work together on this because Internet policies are more set in the stone and the key players get even more powerful. Unfortunately I know from personal experience that this is almost impossible. Best described by my favorite quote from Rolling Stone magazine - "Organized greed is more effective than disorganized democracy". I'm an ex-activist because I just had to stop because of the frustration of it. The business world is at least 1000x more efficient and focused. Nothing will change that it seems. I used to believe we could change it, but unfortunately I don't anymore Although I'll keep trying somehow to stay involved with those who continue to try.Despite all this, a must read.

There is a lot of stuffing in this book. There is a good amount of information on current personalization of the web but the author delves into the backgrounds of pioneers of this technology, character profiles on the "type" of person that creates this code, possible futures of personalization and so on. There is a lot of subjective interpretation when it comes to the history and future of this technology.That being said I do feel a lot more educated on the topic after reading the book. The narrative is smooth and easy to read and even his interpretative predictions on the future of this technology are easy to imagine based on the foundation he creates for his argument.I will no longer roll my eyes when someone talks about how invasive personalization will someday be in our culture.

Very important book on the topic of what does it mean when computer algorithms start watching and interpreting almost everything we do. Everyone should read it who has an interest in the Internet, privacy, or the future of our civilization (and who is not included in that list?)

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