

Social Media and the (Algorithmic) Quest for Trustworthiness

Abstract:

Social media platforms are among the most popular and most used platforms of all. As (essential) infrastructures, these platforms shape and structure the actions and everyday lives of a large number of people worldwide.

In contrast to traditional mass media, social media platforms are traditionally associated with increased opportunities for participation, with the empowerment of users, with democratization and with values such as authenticity and self-determination.

In contrast to this, however, these platforms have been increasingly criticized in recent years. Instead of the empowerment of users, the focus is now on the empowerment of various platform companies and there are reports of manipulation, surveillance, monopolization and threats to democracy and the public good. The platform society presents itself as a society in which the trust of users has been disappointed and violated many times, in which there is an increasing need for trust and in which highly successful and powerful (social media) platform companies are confronted with a variety of trust problems.

This gives rise to the question of what role trust plays in the (re)production and orchestration of platform ecosystems by platform companies? How do large social media platform companies address trust problems of different stakeholder groups in order to build and maintain functional ecosystems?

To discuss these questions, this contribution focuses in particular on a concrete empirical event in the history of YouTube - the so-called "YouTube Adpocalypse".