



School of Computer Science  
University College Dublin

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# A Theoretical Framework for Modern Machine Learning

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*This thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

**School of Computer Science**

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January, 2024



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ACRONYMS

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DRY	Don't Repeat Yourself
RS	recommender system
CF	collaborative filtering

## ABSTRACT

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## DECLARATION

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I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.

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Eolas MacDalta,

January 2, 2025





## COLLABORATIONS

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This work was conducted in collaboration with the following:

- Dr. A. N. Other The work in [Chapter 3](#) was conducted while visting the laboratory of Dr. A. N. Other.



## PUBLICATIONS

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Swap these out for your own publication list (FrontBackmatter/MyPublications.bib).

- He, X., Liao, L., Zhang, H., Nie, L., Hu, X., & Chua, T.-S. (2017). Neural collaborative filtering. *Proceedings of the 26th international conference on world wide web*, 173–182.
- Koren, Y., Bell, R., & Volinsky, C. (2009). Matrix factorization techniques for recommender systems. *Computer*, 42(8), 30–37.
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- Zhou, Y., Wilkinson, D., Schreiber, R., & Pan, R. (2008). Large-scale parallel collaborative filtering for the netflix prize. *Proceedings of the 4th international conference on Algorithmic Aspects in Information and Management (AAIM)*, 337–348.



*We have seen that computer programming is an art,  
because it applies accumulated knowledge to the world,  
because it requires skill and ingenuity, and especially  
because it produces objects of beauty.*

— Donald E. Knuth (Knuth, 1974)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Put your acknowledgments here.

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*Ohana* means family.

Family means nobody gets left behind, or forgotten.

— Lilo & Stitch

Dedicated to the loving memory of Rudolf Miede.

1939 – 2005





## INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by an exponential growth of information and digital content, recommender system (RS) have emerged as pivotal tools in helping users navigate through the vast sea of choices. These systems are integral to numerous applications, from online shopping and streaming services to social media and personalized news feeds. By leveraging advanced algorithms and data-driven techniques, recommender systems aim to predict user preferences and deliver highly relevant content, thereby enhancing user experience and engagement (Seneca, 1969).

The inception of recommender systems can be traced back to the early days of collaborative filtering (CF), which relied on user and item similarities to generate recommendations. Since then, the field has witnessed substantial advancements, incorporating sophisticated models such as matrix factorization, neural networks, and hybrid approaches that blend multiple recommendation strategies. These developments have significantly improved the accuracy and efficiency of recommendations, catering to diverse user needs and preferences (Taleb, 2010).

The original matrix factorisation algorithm proposed by Simon Funk in his blog post factorized the user-item rating matrix as the product of two lower dimensional matrices, the first one has a row for each user, while the second has a column for each item. The row or column associated to a specific user or item is referred to as latent factors. The predicted ratings can be computed as  $\tilde{R} = HW$ ,  $\tilde{R} \in \mathbb{R}^{\text{users} \times \text{items}}$  is the user-item rating matrix,  $H \in \mathbb{R}^{\text{users} \times \text{latent factors}}$  contains the user's latent factors and  $W \in \mathbb{R}^{\text{latent factors} \times \text{items}}$  the item's latent factors. Specifically, the predicted rating user  $u$  will give to item  $i$  is computed as:

$$\tilde{r}_{ui} = \sum_{f=0}^{\text{n factors}} H_{u,f} W_{f,i} \quad (1.1)$$

Despite the remarkable progress, several challenges remain in the design and implementation of recommender systems. Issues such as scalability, cold-start problems, diversity, and fairness

continue to pose significant hurdles. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of user behaviors and the dynamic nature of content necessitate continuous adaptation and innovation in recommendation methodologies (Adams, 2013).

This thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse in the field of recommender systems by addressing key challenges and proposing novel solutions that enhance recommendation quality and user satisfaction. Through a comprehensive exploration of state-of-the-art techniques and rigorous empirical evaluations, this research endeavors to advance our understanding of effective recommendation strategies and their practical applications.

The structure of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the historical development and foundational concepts of recommender systems. Chapter 2 delves into the various algorithmic approaches (Cormen et al., 2009), highlighting their strengths and limitations (Knuth, 1974). Chapter 3 addresses the pressing challenges in the field and reviews contemporary solutions proposed in the literature. Chapter 4 presents the proposed methodologies and experimental setups, followed by a thorough analysis of results in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis with a summary of findings, implications, and directions for future research.

By systematically investigating and addressing the complexities of recommender systems, this thesis aspires to contribute valuable insights and practical advancements to the field, ultimately fostering more personalized and effective user experiences across digital platforms.

### 1.0.1 Testing Code

Let's try some code listings:

---

```
1 def spark(request):
    """
    Creates a spark context

    Parameters
    -----
    request: pytest.FixtureRequest object
        provides access to testing context
```

```

    """
55
56
11  spark = (
57
58      SparkSession
59      .builder
60      .appName('pytest-pyspark-local-testing')
61      .master('local[2]')
16  .getOrCreate()
62
63  )
64
65  request.addfinalizer(lambda: spark.stop())
66
21  return spark
67
68

```

---

### 1.0.2 Algorithm Testing

Let's try an algorithm:

---

```

1: function MERGESORT( $A, i, j$ )
2:   Input array  $A$ , positive integers  $i, j$  between 0 and  $n - 1$ 
3:   if  $j - i \leq 1$  then                                     ▷ length 0 or 1, so already sorted
4:     return
5:   end if
6:    $mid = (i + j) / 2$ 
7:    $mergeSort(A, i, mid)$                                      ▷ first recursive call on left side
8:    $mergeSort(A, mid, j)$                                      ▷ second recursive call on right side
9:    $merge(A, i, mid, j)$ 
10: end function

```

---

## INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

## 2.1 SECTION A

Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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$$a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}.$$

After this fourth paragraph, we start a new paragraph sequence. Hello, here is some text

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- First item in a list
- Second item in a list
- Third item in a list

LABITUR BONORUM PRI NO	QUE VISTA	HUMAN
fastidii ea ius	germano	demonstratea
suscipit instructor	titulo	personas
quaestio philosophia	facto	demonstrated

Table 2.1: Autem usu id.

## 2.1.1 Subsection B

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This is the second paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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Part I

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## TOPIC A

## 3.1 SECTION A

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- First item in a list
- Second item in a list
- Third item in a list

LABITUR BONORUM PRI NO	QUE VISTA	HUMAN
fastidii ea ius	germano	demonstratea
suscipit instructor	titulo	personas
quaestio philosophia	facto	demonstrated

Table 3.1: Autem usu id.

## 3.1.1 Subsection B

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After this fourth paragraph, we start a new paragraph sequence. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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 253 gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected  
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 255 contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ .  
 256 There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  
 257  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

258 Lo sed apprende instruite. Que altere responder su, pan ma, i. e., signo studio. [Figure 3.1b](#) In-  
 259 struite preparation le duo, asia altere tentation web su. Via unic facto rapide de, iste questiones  
 260 methodicamente o uno, nos al.

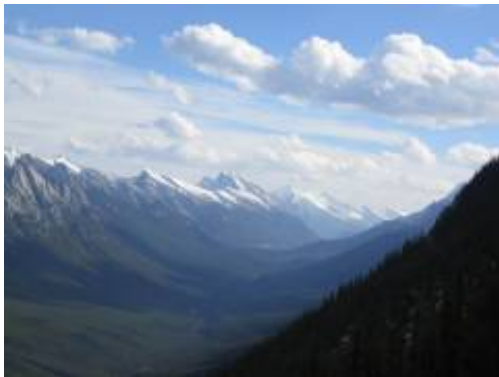
$$\mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{0} & \mathbf{R} \\ \mathbf{R}^T & \mathbf{0} \end{bmatrix} \quad (3.1)$$



(a) Asia personas duo.



(b) Pan ma signo.



(c) Methodicamente o uno.



(d) Titulo debitas.

Figure 3.1: Tu duo titulo debitas latente. Don't Repeat Yourself ([DRY](#))

TOPIC A



## TOPIC B

## 4.1 SECTION A

Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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305 the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

- 306 • First item in a list
- 307 • Second item in a list
- 308 • Third item in a list

#### 309 4.1.1 Subsection B

310 This is the second paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should  
311 show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this  
312 text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference  
313 between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text  
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## TOPIC B

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347 between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text  
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351 but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

Part II

352

PART II

353

354



## TOPIC C

## 5.1 SECTION A

And after the second paragraph follows the third paragraph. Hello, here is some text without  
 a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) +$   
 $\cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there  
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 There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  
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#### 404 5.1.1 Subsection B

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## CONCLUSION

## 6.1 SECTION A

Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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And after the second paragraph follows the third paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ .

## CONCLUSION

There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.

$$a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}.$$

After this fourth paragraph, we start a new paragraph sequence. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.

$\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is

there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest

gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected

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There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.

$$a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}.$$

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look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information

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the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

- First item in a list
- Second item in a list
- Third item in a list

### 6.1.1 Subsection B

This is the second paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should

show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this

text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference

between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text

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And after the second paragraph follows the third paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

After this fourth paragraph, we start a new paragraph sequence. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this text, you will get no information  $E = mc^2$ . Really? Is there no information? Is there a difference between this text and some nonsense like “Huardest gefburn”? Kjift – not at all! A blind text like this gives you information about the selected font, how the letters are written and an impression of the look.  $\sqrt[n]{a} \cdot \sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{ab}$ . This text should contain all letters of the alphabet and it should be written in of the original language.  $\frac{\sqrt[n]{a}}{\sqrt[n]{b}} = \sqrt[n]{\frac{a}{b}}$ . There is no need for special content, but the length of words should match the language.  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

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This is the second paragraph. Hello, here is some text without a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) + \cos^2(\beta) = 1$ . If you read this

## CONCLUSION

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Part III

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APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX

## A.1 SECTION A

And after the second paragraph follows the third paragraph. Hello, here is some text without  
a meaning. This text should show what a printed text will look like at this place.  $\sin^2(\alpha) +$   
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 587  $a\sqrt[n]{b} = \sqrt[n]{a^n b}$ .

- 588 • First item in a list
- 589 • Second item in a list
- 590 • Third item in a list

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602

This document is typeset using the *UCD Thesis* style developed by Aonghus Lawlor<sup>1</sup>.

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This is in turn based on the `classicthesis` style developed by André Miede and Ivo Pletikosić. The style was inspired by Robert Bringhurst's seminal book on typography *The Elements of Typographic Style*.

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*Final Version* as of January 2, 2025 (version 1.0).

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<sup>1</sup> [UCD Thesis Style](#)