

Transcript for The Filter Bubble – part two

OK. So, moving on, so if the social media sites can personalise the user experience, to block out things they think we don't want to see, well, begs the question, what else is being hidden from us? Well, in his talk Eli Pariser gives another example. Did you know that if two people type the same word into some of the most popular search engines, the results might be totally different?

I know. Crazy, huh? Well, maybe you can try it one time with a friend. The example that Eli gave in his talk was two of his friends who have very different interests. They both typed the word 'Egypt' into a search engine. One got results from news websites about recent events in Egypt and the other got mainly travel guides. The results were totally different and this is because some search engines record information about what we usually look at, what we like and what our interests are.

Some sites are now starting to personalise what an individual user sees. Now, sometimes, of course, it can be really helpful to have information personalised for us. It can save us time searching and often actually we do want to see the information that we are more interested in. It can make online shopping easier and it helps us to connect with like-minded people. But let's stop for a second and think. Do we really want the internet to offer us only what the internet thinks we want to see? Aren't we going to miss out on a lot of really interesting and fresh information?

Well, whatever you think about the filter bubble, I think we all need to be aware that this is happening. By controlling the flow of information each individual receives, these 'algorithms' mean we don't have access to all the information that is out there. So, aren't we missing out on a lot of really useful stuff?

The question is what can we do? Well, I have to say, I agree with Eli Pariser. I think we need to try and step outside of our filter bubbles from time to time and try to get our information from other sources, as well as the internet. And actually you can look for alternative search engines that don't filter the content in the same way. They exist too. There are also ways to 'depersonalise' searches, but I will tell you more about that another day. For now, just try to make sure that you keep your eyes and ears open and learn as much as you can about how the internet actually works. Things change very quickly, but we should all try and keep up to date and learn more about how the wonderful worldwide web works. Thank you very much.