What is shaping culture? The automated lifestyle

By Brett Rogers   6 Apr 2020

AI is ubiquitous and it shapes the way we consume media, the way we network with people, the way we see the world and it's integrated into everything," said AI researcher, Alex Comninos. This week I immerse you in the automated lifestyle.

Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

Do you agree that, as life becomes more and more AI-driven, so we'll start having decisions taken away from us by the systems that serve us? Or, are you in denial, claiming it will never happen?

I'm here to ensure you it will. Consider this: Spotify already tells us which music to listen to, UberEats tells us which restaurant we would like, Tinder suggests people we might like.

'Pssssssh' you might say those are small things. What about this? Algorithms operating without human intervention are already playing a significant role in financial markets.

85% of all trading in the foreign exchange markets is conducted by algorithms alone.

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I'm not alone in believing that, as AI becomes more and more intelligent, so important life decisions will start being taken over by devices like Siri and Alexa, making us more and more dependent on our AI overlords.

But this is not something to be concerned about, according to a lecturer in Architectural Technology at Harvard Graduate School of Design, Jose Luis Garcia del Castillo Lopez. As someone whose career has been massively impacted by AI and the tools that it provides, he is more excited than worried.

"I think AI is amazing," he said.

> " *I am very happy that AI is in our lives; my life is being improved in tiny ways. I'm not scared about AI as a thing on its own – AI is just like everything else, it has people behind it. We're very far away from this 'Skynet evil AI' that's going kill us all, take over the world and turn us into the matrix. That's not going to happen, we're not going to see this in our lifetimes.* "

AI researcher, Alex Comninos, pointed out that not everyone believes AI is benign and that scientists and philosophers have concerns including attributes of the systems, attributes of the humans who operate the systems, and how the systems are managed or governed. The big issue for them is bias; we tend to look at machines as something neutral whereas it totally would not be."

Extrapolate that to 'who designs the systems'?. As Comninos added: "If the system is designed by a 'racist' police force, then the AI itself will be racist, thereby creating ingrained bigotry in the system which could be impossible to address.

It' not all doom and gloom though, as AI becomes more and more a part of our day, some people have gained immense value from devices with these capabilities, one such person is Strategic Planner Kaybee Ntloana whose relationship with her AI Virtual Assistant, Bixby, is both useful and personal.

Another way in which AI has impacted our lives dramatically is in dating. Liam McGregor and Sophia Sterling-Angus took it a whole step further by creating The Stanford Marriage Pact for an economics assignment. This is a campus-wide questionnaire developed to 'ensure participants against marital disaster' by pairing each respondent with a fellow student who meets their basic criteria for a spouse.

The interesting thing about the Marriage Pact is that, although the AI is taught what the participant wants, it actually seeks out the respondent who most accurately matches your perceived desires, meaning the AI is learning about what you want and can predict matches, as opposed to simply rather responding to pre-programmed information.

This certainly suggests that, from the hugely complicated AIs developing medicines to the simpler task of having your diary organised, AI is here and it's not going anywhere.

ABOUT BRETT ROGERS

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