

# 62-150 Assignment#1 These are not just Ads.

Thursday, September 10, 2015 6:53 AM

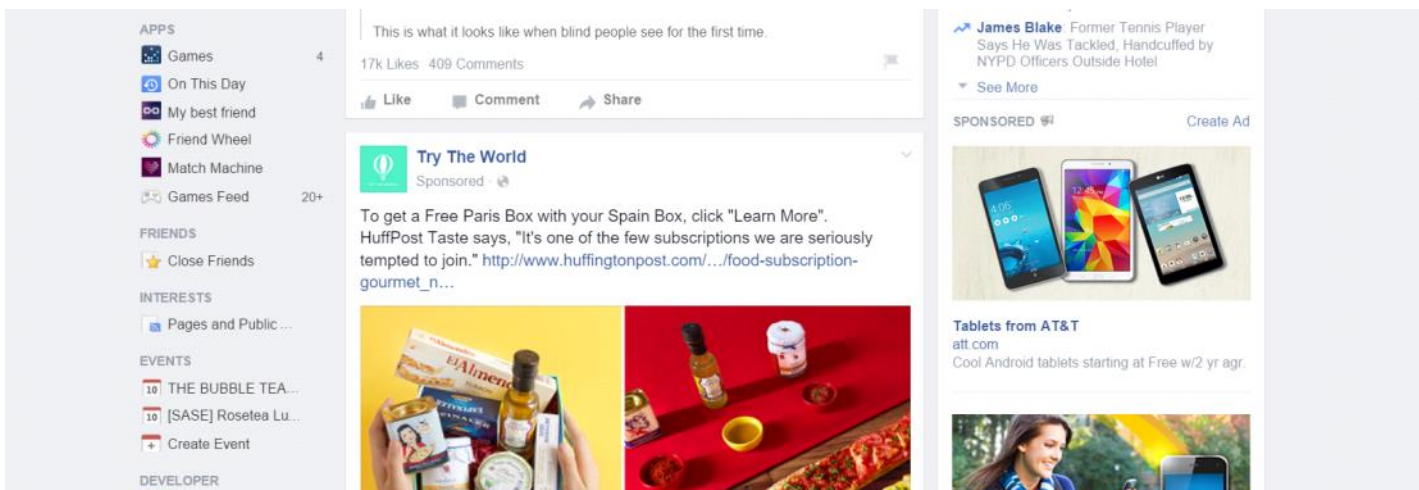
Ads are probably one of the most common forms of media. For most of the ads we encounter daily, we just give them a glance if they are not interested or perform further actions if they are related and attracted. As technologies of big data are developing and the awareness among companies/organizations to understand audience is raised, the question why some ads are around us and some are not becomes quite interesting and traceable. Today, my journal of media will be focusing on ads - what ads I encounter during one day of school, what actions I interact with them and what they say about me. Particularly, I want to explore why I perform certain actions to some ads and what these ads are saying about my identity, personality and interest.

## 9:00am - getting up



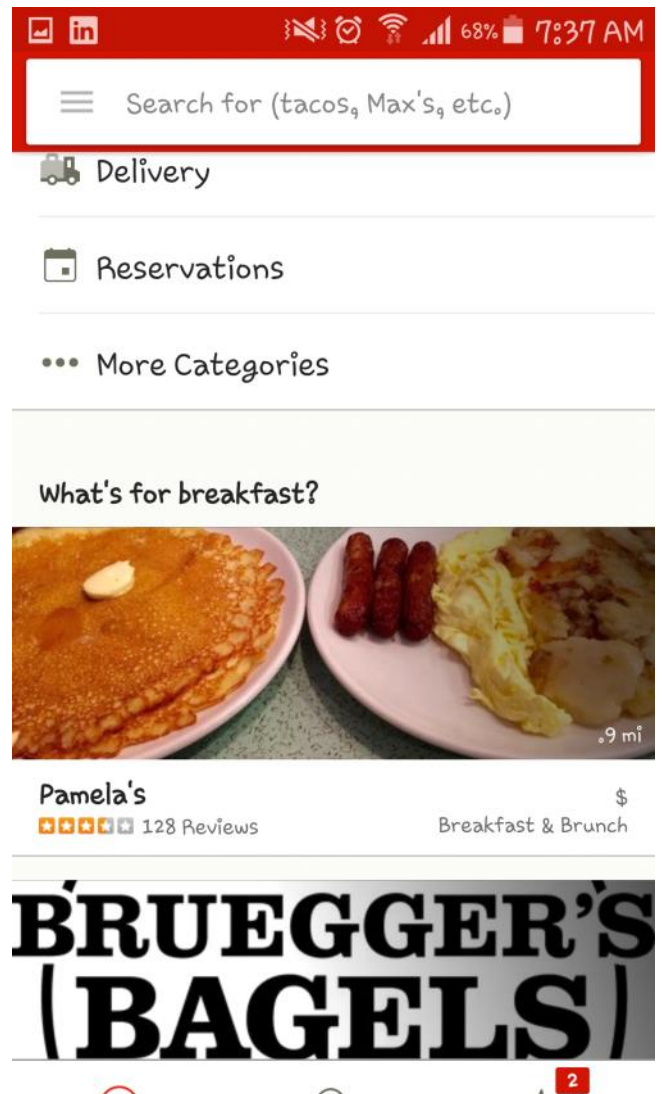
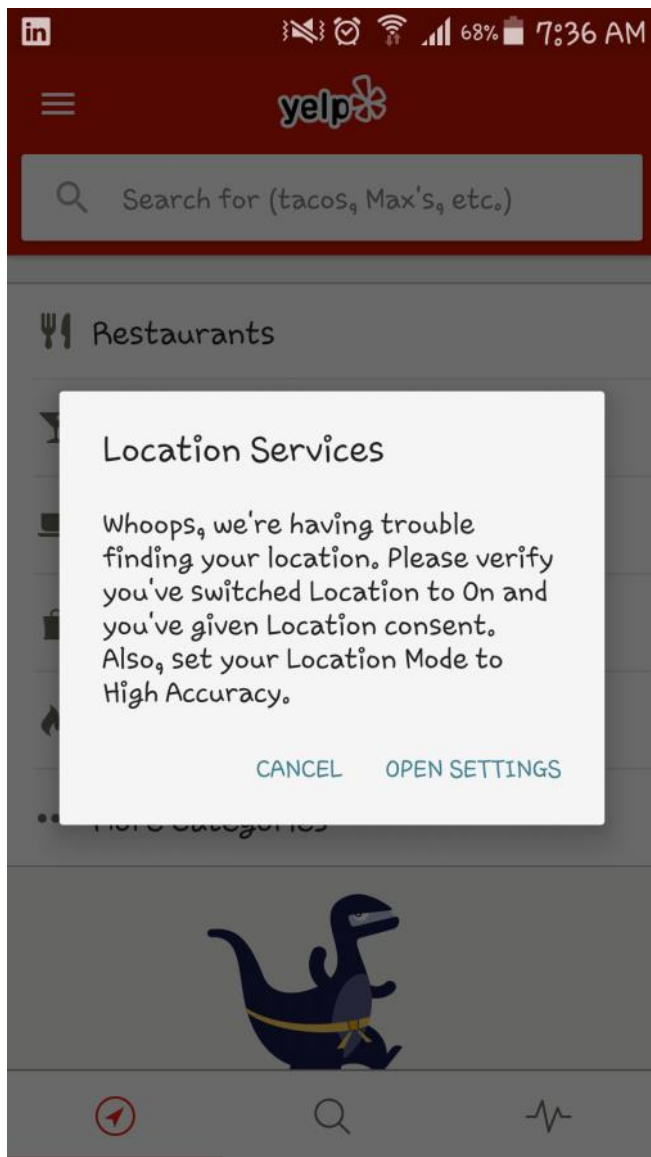
I saw my storage box right next to my bed. Home Depot places a big logo on the box it's selling. It didn't appear at the right timing - I packed and stored everything at the end of last semester and now I would want to dispose them instead of getting more boxes. So I did nothing to it.

## 9:20am - checking my Facebook





I opened my Facebook in the browser. Normally I would have the AdsBlock extension open and this time I paused it and was interested to see what ads Facebook will recommend to me. These three ads appear first: "Try The World" - I browsed their website before and I guess that was probably why they wanted to try again to convert me to a subscriber; "Tablets from AT&T" - My phone is on AT&T plan so I had to perform some actions on their system, but the recommended tablets seemed to be unnecessary since I may already have some sort of electronic devices if I am already on the plan; "PEOPLES E-account"- Some of my posts were related to cars but I don't actually have a car myself so I wouldn't need some gas service. I ended up doing nothing with these three ads. These three ads somehow also indicated that a) Facebook knows that I am a student. b) Facebook knows my browsing history. c) Facebook thinks that I am interested in tablets, especially android. Part of them are indeed facts - I am a student and I prefer android. However, the reason I didn't do anything was still the low match rate - my online behavior can be perceived with bias by the recommendation system of Facebook - afterall, they don't have all the data.





# BAGELS



I was looking for breakfast and opened my Yelp app on the phone. It prompted me to turn on the location service - I would also consider this as a form of media, as well as our notification center. These are media contents that are more text-based and even more targeted for certain context. I didn't realize that these prompts/windows are medium before. After I turned on the location services, Yelp recommends me some restaurants for breakfast - these are the ads that is location-based and time-based. Yelp interpreted the right context and thus the ads provided me with meaningful information. I clicked on the Pamela's and saw that it's still 0.9miles away from me, so I just went to Hunt for breakfast.

## 11:30am - checking my emails



*Devpost is the home for hackers, like you.*

We're hiring **mid** and **senior** level Ruby developers. If we hire someone that you refer to us, we'll give you \$2,000. *Ka-ching!*



This week's Commit is pretty exciting. #jussayin

▶ Watch The Commit

## Online hackathons

**NEW Ford's Hsuehshan Tunnel Transformer** · So there's this tunnel between Taipei and Yilan. It's epic (13km long!), but also super congested. A 30 min trip regularly takes 2 hours. Help us find new ways to alleviate traffic and cut down on

This email was sent from challengepost.com. I have an account on the website but wasn't being active at all for the past few months. The email shows some open hackathons that I might be interested in attending. It is the type of "checking-in" email that aims to engage current users. The ads also reflect my major - electrical and computer engineering. I also noticed that this first ad has a big button and is supposed to link to a video. This is probably the first video ad I have encountered today. The wording "Commit" talked effectively to me who is a software engineer so I clicked the button subconsciously.



#### 4:30pm - Activities Fair



There were overwhelmingly large amount of posters, flyers, videos/slides showing on the laptops, swags, in-person/group conversations at the Activities Fair. I could imagine thousands of media contents are circulating around me, in a fast, diversified and wide-spreading manner. The set of media contents for each organization served as their ads to recruit new members. I would normally walk up to any organization that attracted me, picked up their flyers and talked to the persons there. Sometimes, I would sign up for their d-list. The series of actions indicated my increasing interest. Surrounded by the various ads of student organization, somehow also reflected that my willingness to get involved, or my active participation in school life.

#### Summary

Ads are presented in a context. The better the ad fits the time, location and people in the context, the more effective and targeted it is. To understand the context, ad media producers are utilizing big data - our browser history, form submission online and GPS information are all part of it. The algorithms of the recommendation system are improving fast and it can be both surprising and worrisome. We will be surprised how well they will know us before we even recognize what we need. At the same time, it's a bit scary that a machine can have such accurate prediction. I later found a Chrome extension that shows you what your ads say about you. Looking at the analysis, I realized an interesting cycle - we consume media contents and generate data about us and then the data is used to help feed us more relevant media contents. The engine that drives the cycle comes along with privacy issue. And I think the interplay of privacy and a culture of participation and sharing lays the foundation of a complex media system in our life.