

Personalisation and Autonomy in Femtech Platforms

Privacy calculus and the personalisation paradox

Femtech platforms rely on sensitive personal data to deliver personalised services. However, greater personalisation may increase both perceived usefulness and feelings of surveillance. This project draws on privacy calculus theory, which explains disclosure decisions through perceived benefits and risks, and psychological reactance theory, which explains resistance to perceived threats to individual freedom. It investigates whether users' responses to personalisation reflect benefit–risk evaluations or whether perceived loss of autonomy provides an additional explanation.

Research question

How does personalisation influence users' willingness to disclose data to femtech platforms, and how does meaningful control over data sharing shape the roles of perceived benefits, privacy risks, and psychological reactance?

Potential quantitative approach

A 2 × 2 online experiment varying the level of personalisation and user control over data sharing in hypothetical femtech app descriptions. Validated survey scales would measure perceived benefits, privacy risks, psychological reactance, and willingness to disclose data. Regression and mediation analysis could assess whether reactance provides explanatory value beyond the benefit–risk evaluation proposed by privacy calculus. The study would focus on one application category, with sample size determined through a power analysis. No personal health data would be required.

Expected contribution

The thesis would examine the explanatory limits of privacy calculus in a sensitive digital service context and assess whether autonomy-related resistance helps explain the personalisation paradox. It would also inform how femtech firms design personalisation and data controls to support user acceptance.

Supervisor and contact

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Interested students are welcome to contact Mana Farshid to discuss the project and thesis scope.