

# **Don't judge a doll by its cover**

A critical data studies approach towards the simplification of contemporary data-driven services

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## **Don't judge a doll by its cover: a critical data studies approach towards the simplification of contemporary data-driven services**

As contemporary and omnipresent knowledge technologies represent data in simplified forms, data illiterates are tempted to make momentous decisions based on misleading data-driven services. That is why this research critically reflects on the ramifications of a data-driven marketing tool that provides segmentation insights to both institutional and private establishments. Through the methodological frame of critical data studies and data assemblages, the research approaches the tool as a Matryoshka doll, gradually uncovering its underlying layers. The main argument put forward is to understand such layered data representations (for example infographics and data visualisations) as 'reassurance tools', as they leave data illiterates under the impression that they are able to utopianly interpret, understand and deploy data practices. In line with this, key points are given for the improvement of the unbalanced power relation between data-driven services and users, from an academic and corporate perspective.

**Keywords:** data-driven services, data literacy, critical data studies, neo-institutionalism, knowledge economy, data-driven marketing

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