

The Evolution of Attention Economy in the Age of Digital Capitalism: Surveillance of Digital Data and Manipulation of Consumer Behaviour¹



Fatma Kübra KAYA²
Fuat GÜLLÜPINAR³

Abstract

In today's consumer society, data has become the subject of digital surveillance, whose economic value is steadily increasing, and has turned into a strong input for digital capitalism with the development of online behavioral advertising. This article argues that surveillance capitalists manipulate personal and behavioral data for commercial purposes, triggering immediate consumption behaviors and ultimately creating passive consumers whose privacy rights are violated. Despite concerns about privacy and security, individuals remain unaware of the workings and actors behind digital data surveillance and passively accept the process. The paper examines the role of attention economy and online advertisements in shaping consumer behavior, highlighting how individuals unknowingly contribute to this system and how their choices and privacy are compromised. Additionally, the article inves-

-
- ¹ This study has derived from the master's thesis titled "Data Surveillance that Becomes Commonplace in the Phantasmagoria of Consumption Created through Online Behavioral Advertisements" which is written under the supervision Prof. Dr. Fuat Güllüpinar and accepted by the Anadolu University Graduate School, Türkiye.
- ² **Sorumlu Yazar/ Corresponding Author:** Anadolu Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, kbkaya12@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6653-5575>.
- ³ Prof. Dr., Anadolu Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, fgullupinar@anadolu.edu.tr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3661-7232>

Makale Türü / Paper Type: Derleme Makale / Conceptual Paper

Makale Geliş Tarihi / Received: 11.11.2024

Makale Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 07.01.2025

tigates how these trends lead to the normalization of surveillance. In the context of this paper which is based on theoretical research, employs the literature review method as its methodological approach.

Keywords: Digital Surveillance, Attention Economy, Online Behavioral Advertising Model, Consume Society, Digital Capitalism

Dijital Kapitalizm Çağında Dikkat Ekonomisinin Evrimi: Dijital Verilerin Gözetimi ve Tüketim Davranışlarının Manipülasyonu

Öz

Günümüz tüketim toplumunda veri, ekonomik değeri gittikçe artan dijital gözetime konu olan ve çevrimiçi davranışsal reklamcılığın gelişmesiyle dijital kapitalizmin güçlü bir girdisi haline gelmiştir. Bu makale, gözetim kapitalistlerinin ticari amaçlarla kişisel ve davranışsal verileri manipüle ederek anlık tüketim davranışlarını tetiklediğini ve nihayetinde mahremiyet hakları ihlal edilen pasif tüketiciler yarattığını savunmaktadır. Mahremiyet ve güvenlik endişelerine rağmen, bireyler dijital veri gözetiminin işleyişi ve aktörleri hakkında bilgi sahibi olmamakta ve süreci pasif bir şekilde kabul etmektedirler. Makale, dikkat ekonomisi ve çevrimiçi reklamların tüketici davranışlarını şekillendirmedeki rolünü inceleyerek, bireylerin bilinçsizce bu sisteme nasıl katkıda bulunduklarını ve seçimlerinin ile mahremiyetlerinin nasıl tehdit altına alındığını vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, makale söz konusu eğilimlerin nasıl bir gözetim normalleşmesine yol açtığını araştırmaktadır. Teorik araştırmaya dayalı bu makale kapsamında metodolojik olarak literatür taraması yöntemi kullanılmıştır

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital Gözetim, Dikkat Ekonomisi, Çevrimiçi Davranışsal Reklamcılık, Tüketim Toplumu, Dijital Kapitalizm

Introduction

The transformation of digital surveillance into a fluid and flexible form has significantly altered its relationship with capitalism. The intensification of corporate economic interests has led to the realization of

data surveillance primarily driven by economic motives. Every moment spent in the virtual environment, every transaction, and even every click results in the generation of data, leaving behind digital traces by users. The increase in digital data, paralleling the growing use of technology, has naturally led to higher costs in data processing and storage. In this context, the need to extract the most meaningful and useful data for companies' goals has given rise to big data technology. With the aid of big data technology, institutions are now able to make faster and more accurate decisions by having meaningful and concise data, rather than vast amounts of raw data. However, on the other side of the process, the volume and intensity of digital surveillance has increased even further with the rise of big data. The efforts of companies to process big data efficiently and maximize profits through customer insights have led to the emergence of the concept of "surveillance capitalism." Shoshana Zuboff defines surveillance capitalism as the conversion of individuals' virtual experiences into behavioral data for commercial profit (Zuboff, 2021, p.11). Global digital platforms such as Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Amazon collect personal and behavioral data from users, using these data through artificial intelligence algorithms for targeted online behavioral advertisements or selling them directly to third-party advertisers.

In today's digital world, another valuable resource for companies, as important as data, is individuals' attention. In this world, overflowing with endless information, content, and indicators, attention has inevitably become a scarce and valuable resource. This has led to the emergence of the concept of "attention economy." Attention has -like data- become a new form of economic capital. Tim Wu (2021) refers to attention-driven digital platforms as "attention merchants." The primary aim of these platforms is to capture and manipulate users' attention in the most effective and rapid way and sell this attention to advertisers. These platforms, described by Wu (2016) as "attention merchants," function similarly to surveillance capitalists as described by Zuboff (2021). In this sense, attention, along with data, represents the second most valuable resource in the new economy. Data and attention form two intertwined, inseparable

sources, and the economic system built upon the violation of privacy shapes today's economic model.

The first stage of this process involves manipulating users' attention and coercing them into exhibiting certain behaviors (such as accepting third-party cookies or agreeing to privacy policies without reading them), thereby collecting data. The second stage involves processing these data—raw materials—through predictive machines, namely algorithms, to transform them into behavioral data. In the subsequent phase, this behavioral data is used to predict and influence individuals' future choices, behaviors, and decisions, which in turn fuels online behavioral advertisements, creating a tension between consumer desires and privacy concerns.

The decreasing power and capacity of attention in the online ecosystem is not a random occurrence. In today's digital society, where speed and immediacy are prioritized, the constant flow of infinite information, indicators, and content weakens individuals' ability to focus and concentrate on a particular subject for extended periods. This phenomenon can be explained by Paul Virilio's view that "As speed increases, freedom decreases" (Virilio, 2021, p. 134), which examines the relationship between technology and society through the concepts of speed and acceleration. While this dizzying speed is seen as a symbol of efficiency, superiority, wealth, and high performance, it also prevents individuals from taking the necessary time to pause and engage in rational thinking. With the goal of weakening perception and cognitive capacity, technology fills individuals' minds with unnecessary content, increasing their susceptibility to fall into various traps (Virilio, 2003, pp. 39-41). Virilio's observations regarding the admiration for the raw power of speed and voluntary surrender to it (Gottschalk, 1999, p. 313) form a significant basis for this discussion. This is because the ability to think deeply or understand is inversely proportional to speed (Bertman, 1998, p. 84).

This article, grounded in a theoretical study, has been conducted using the literature/document review method as its methodological approach. A review of previous studies in the relevant field reveals that

the concept of surveillance is often discussed through topics such as security, classification, exclusion/separation, social media usage, and the direct exposure of the body. However, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive studies (especially in Turkey) that address data surveillance through targeted advertisements, consumer culture, and attention economy. In this context, the article is considered significant for its sociological analysis of commercial digital surveillance within the frameworks of surveillance capitalism and the attention economy. It examines the surveillance process through the simultaneous exploitation of attention and data while also highlighting the normalization of violations of data privacy and confidentiality. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to future empirical research by offering a theoretical foundation in its own context.

Understanding the Transformation of Attention Economy under the Grip of Digital Capitalism

In order to elucidate the dynamics and motivations behind individuals turning a blind eye to or ignoring data surveillance during the act of consumption in the online world, the concept of attention economy should also be mentioned. Attention is the new scarce resource of today's economy, which refers to the effective and efficient use of scarce resources by individuals and societies. One of the costs of having easy and free access to vast amounts of information, content and services is attention. For this reason, the information age is now often discussed in the context of the attention economy (Hendricks and Vestergaard, 2019, pp. 2-4).

In recent years, the concept of attention has come to occupy a key place in the general discourse surrounding the notions of the 'new economy' or the 'digital economy', as well as in the critical analyses of cultural theorists considering the politics of digital media (Terranova, 2012, p. 1). Herbert Simon was the first to articulate that a world overflowing with information suffers from attention deprivation and laid the foundations of the concept of the "attention economy". According to Simon (1971,

p. 40), attention becomes a scarce resource because it is consumed by information itself. The level of attention that individuals have is not sufficient to make sense of and process each and every one of the ever-increasing number of indicators, information or notifications that surround them. Especially since the second half of the 1990s, with the development and widespread use of digital technologies, especially the internet, the attention economy has become a popular concept that has been widely discussed. First used by Michael H. Goldhaber in January 1997 at the conference “Economics of Digital Information” hosted by Harvard University, Goldhaber wanted to underline that attention as a scarce and valuable resource would henceforth drive the economy. In a capitalist competitive environment, attention has become the new symbol of power. Considered in the context of the dynamics of today’s digitalized capitalism, the goal of the attention economy is to attract as much attention as possible. Tangible goods and production processes are only secondary in an attention economy. The priority is therefore to attract or usurp attention (Goldhaber, 1997). Informational abundance creates poverty by consuming and scarifying attention. This has led to the emergence of a new market for attention measured by algorithms, clicks or impressions (Terranova, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, besides data, another valuable resource of the 21st century is attention.

Tim Wu’s (2016) “The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads”, which deals with the process of accepting attention as an economic resource and business model just like data in a historical perspective, has a very important place in the attention economy discussions. Wu begins to explain the logic of this business model, which he calls attention mongering, with the success story of The New York Sun, a famous newspaper in the 1800s that featured third-page news and plenty of advertisements and achieved enormous sales rates by selling at a fraction of its cost. Thanks to these sensational, non-newsworthy but attention-grabbing stories, readers were also exposed to the advertisements in the newspaper. At this point, the attention of the readers was also sold to the advertisers who paid the highest price. Adopted by the New York Sun, a penny newspaper in the 1800s, attention mongering,

which is based on attracting people's attention with free but appealing content and then selling the total attention to another medium, continues to be a business model adopted by giant companies such as Google, Facebook and Amazon that dominate the sector today. The conscious and controlled attention of individuals has evolved into impulsive/automatic attention as a result of the relentless competition of attention merchants and the abundance of content that is difficult to resist (Wu, 2021, pp. 17-25). The success of attention merchants depends on their success in diverting and capturing attention from its focal point, and in luring and capturing it in the direction they want for purely commercial reasons (Wu, 2021, p. 30). In this sense, it is no surprise or coincidence that the advertising industry, which has been on the rise since the 1920s as the most effective method of reaching the human mind, creating demand, attracting attention and ultimately increasing sales with the cooperation of art and science (Wu, 2021, p. 68), has reached the point and power it has today. Targeted behavioral advertising, which is embodied by algorithms and data, has literally become an attention economy and demand creation engineering with its power to control the mind and behavior. In other words, the mastery of accessing and activating the mind at the right moment and in the right medium by predicting what the person wants. All the successive technological innovations in the form of newspapers, radio, television, computers, network technologies and smartphones have turned into a tyrant monopolizing the commercial harvest of attention (Wu, 2021, p. 180). Unfortunately, the hopes that the wind of resistance and the rising spirit of rebellion that blew in the 1960s would overthrow this advertising industry that undermines free will and exploits attention, and that it would disappear due to the apathy of the masses, faded before it could blossom. Aware that with the rise of individualism, the desire to project authenticity and uniqueness through possessions and to feel free by consuming will not be easily extinguished, attention mongers have continued to strengthen their strategies to better understand individuals and to uncover deeply hidden consumption desires (Wu, 2021, pp. 189-190). At this point, it is possible to say that the advertising model based on personalization, called targeted advertising or CBA, emerged as a

result of this insight. The belief that it is close to impossible to remain indifferent to advertisements that speak directly to the individual has brought about a radical change in marketing dynamics and surveillance practices. In the new era, attention and data have become the pillars of surveillance.

Attention mongering is essentially the attention-centered version of the logic of surveillance capitalism instead of data. The secret behind the success of both is capitalism itself. Capitalism, which can take shape according to any situation or condition, in a fluid and flexible form, so to speak, proves once again that it knows no boundaries by identifying the blind spots and weaknesses of the human mind and directly monetizing data and attention. Another point that should not be overlooked at this point is the phenomenon of acceleration, which is seen as the key element of progress in contemporary societies. Attention mongers and surveillance capitalists, who covet the time necessary for in-depth thinking, measuring and weighing decisions, are able to control and usurp the time and experience of consumers and direct them in the desired way thanks to technologies that enable 24/7 accelerated, unlimited consumption (Crary, 2015, p. 48). In today's society, the temporal and spatial gap between the emergence of desires and wishes and their fulfillment has been closed by the culture of speed, which, in John Tomlinson's words, melts time and space in one pot. In this age of immediacy or immediacy, the immediate fulfillment of wants and desires has become possible with a tactile effortlessness (2007, p. 91). Therefore, it is impossible for individuals to focus their attention on the right point, as they are constantly "poked" with active notifications sent to their devices by attention brokers (Cloarec, 2020, p. 2). A study by Drouin et al. (2012) on 290 university students found that 89% of the participants felt as if they had not received any active notifications during the day and felt the need to check their devices. This so-called "phantom vibration syndrome" was found to be less common in people with higher levels of awareness and attention. On the other hand, it was revealed that most of the students who felt phantom vibrations did not feel any discomfort from this situation and were not willing to turn off the notifications and stop the vibration.

In his book “Infinite Distraction: Paying Attention to Social Media”, Dominic Pettman, as the title suggests, has mostly addressed attention hijacking through social media. However, it is also possible to adapt Pettman’s reading of attention to advertisements. In fact, it is possible to adapt most of the expressions used by Pettman in defining social media to online behavioral advertisements. It can be said that these definitions valid for social media, which is a subtle mechanism that limits the focus of individuals, makes it difficult for them to concentrate their attention on something specific and encourages them to consume without measure (Pettman, 2021, pp. 11-12), are also valid for online behavioral advertisements. Consumerism is the new and dominant form of existence in today’s society. Therefore, one of the factors that are effective in making individuals’ online behaviors and habits calculable and predictable through big data analyses or algorithms is the consumers themselves, who leave digital traces through cookies. Consumers, too, have an endless desire for distraction. The capitalist system monitors individuals’ online movements, interactions and data as much as possible with distraction techniques and uses them for its own purposes (Pettman, 2021, pp. 16-17).

Data Surveillance and Manipulative Consumption Techniques

Cookie walls and online behavioral advertisements are elaborate traps designed to blind individuals’ attention and perform data surveillance. Pettman’s (2021, pp. 25-26) answer to the question of why, despite being aware of distracting “clickbait”, individuals willingly continue to be seduced by them is that desire overcomes logic and knowledge. As mentioned earlier, in today’s consumer society, where real needs are replaced by hyper-real needs and the fulfillment of wants and desires takes precedence, rational thought is eliminated by the cooperation of distractions and consumers who are ready to be distracted. Individuals pay the price for the lack of attention and desire for distraction that has become the driving force of capitalism by becoming the subject of data surveillance. In the phantasmagoria of commodity abundance, individuals are insidiously persuaded not to question rationally and not to look out for their own interests in the face of the tempting options presented to them (Pettman, 2021, p. 97).

JOIN THE WORLD OF OCCASION PRIVILEGES

Enter your email address

SIGN UP

- ☐ I have read the Campaign Notification System [Information Text](#)
- ☐ I give my [express consent](#) to receive commercial electronic messages and to process my data within this scope .



Customer Service **444 37 36**

Figure 1. An example of the dark pattern technique
(www.occasion.com.tr, screenshot date 10/11/2024)

In the example of the dark pattern on an e-commerce website in Figure 1, users are triggered to be informed about discounts before the stocks run out or the discount period expires, and in this context, they are conditioned to share their e-mail addresses. User consent is eviscerated, and it is attempted to be bypassed with perfunctory checkboxes.

See personalised recommendations

Sign in

New customer? [Start here.](#)

Figure 2. An example of the dark pattern technique
(www.amazon.com, screenshot date 09/11/2024)

As can be seen from the examples above, there are many different applications of the dark pattern technique that attract users' attention and encourage consumption. For example, as can be seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3, an e-commerce website requires membership and compels users to register in order to shop at lower prices or to offer a better online

experience. The ultimate goal here is to get users to share their e-mail and other information with them, rather than to buy something.



Figure 3. An example of the dark pattern technique
(www.tatilbudur.com.tr, screenshot date 10/11/2024)

The stopwatch in Figure 4 draws attention to the short duration of the discount and creates a perception that the opportunity must be utilized before the time expires. Therefore, as a result of convincing consumers that the most accurate and rational option is presented for them with the dark pattern technique, their decisions and choices can be directed in the desired way. At the same time, companies or platforms can often capitalize on consumers' carelessness and loopholes in order to meet current needs and desires, demanding personal data or extra fees at the payment stage. Beneath the ornate, alluring appearance of dark patterns are hidden intentions to exploit attention, data and fees.

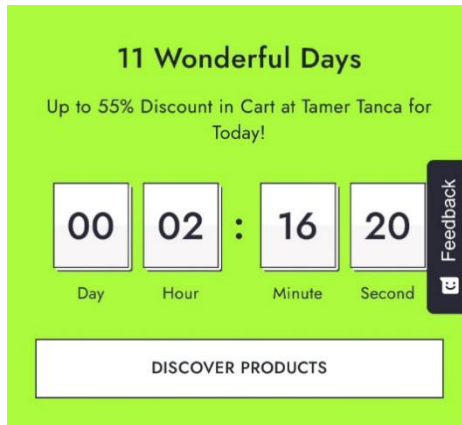


Figure 4. An example of the dark pattern technique
(www.boyner.com.tr, screenshot date 10/11/2024)

The “nudging theory” or “nudge theory” put forward by economics professor Richard Thaler and law professor Cass Sunstein is essentially a behavioral economics theory. In 2008, they published “Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness” and they explained why choice architecture should be used to nudge individuals to make the most correct, rational, and efficient decision for themselves among the options they face. This choice architecture is based on the idea that contrary to popular belief, individuals do not always make the most rational decisions for themselves or their environment. In this context, they argued that a mechanism could be put in place to “nudge” individuals to make better decisions and more rational choices in areas such as health, ecology or security. For example, nudging people to order less food by reducing the size and attractiveness of menu screens in restaurants can help reduce waste. Therefore, it seems that this choice architecture called nudging was created to serve the useful purpose of positively changing individuals’ preferences, behaviors and decisions without blocking, hiding or overtly manipulating any option. However, over time, this choice architecture has started to be applied in ways that manipulate preferences or decisions in manipulative ways, in ways that direct preferences or decisions in line with the interests of a certain group, and has turned into a mechanism whose ethical validity has been questioned (Selinger & Whyte, 2011, pp. 923-924).

The most visible areas of unethical use of nudging architecture are politics and undoubtedly marketing. It is seen that the nudging technique, especially in cookie walls, which are data collection tools, or in the privacy policy preferences of sites and applications, is used in a way that undermines freedom of choice and is designed to serve data surveillance. Although there is not an obvious imposition as in the dark pattern technique, when examined carefully, it can be noticed that there is a soft but deliberate effort to direct individuals to make the desired choices. Selinger and Whyte (2011, pp. 929-930) drew attention to the gravity of the current scenario by stating that the more immune individuals become to being nudged, the less uncomfortable they are with being controlled

and manipulated. In addition, they criticized Thaler and Sunstein for not providing a reliable guideline or formula to ensure that the nudging architecture serves its intended purpose and is not used as a fraudulent manipulation tool.

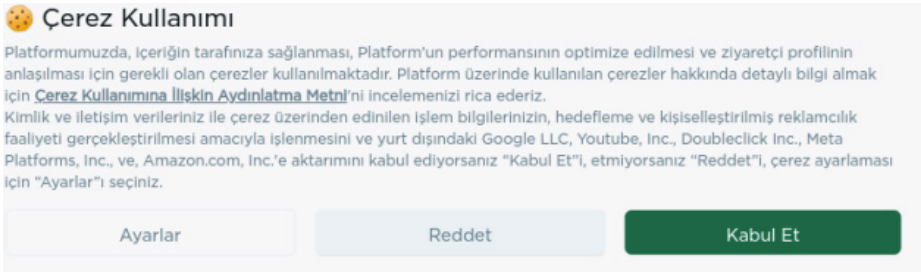


Figure 5. An example of a cookie wall prepared in accordance with the nudging technique (www.starbucks.com.tr, screenshot date 09/11/2024)

It is seen that the option boxes on the cookie preference wall in Figure 5, which is prepared according to the nudging technique, are designed in different colors. It does not seem possible to explain the use of a striking, dark color in the accept cookie use box, while a vague, faint color is used in the reject section by coincidence. Since a person who wants to set cookies himself/herself is asked not to choose this option at all, it is colored in the same way as the background, making it deliberately difficult to notice.

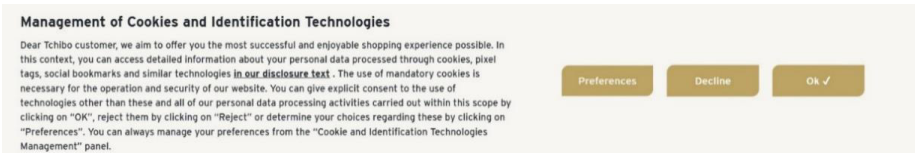


Figure 6. An example of a cookie wall prepared in accordance with the nudging technique (www.tchibo.com.tr, screenshot date 09/11/2024)

In Figure 6, although the boxes are all presented in the same color and background, there is a check mark next to the “ok” button to accept

the use of cookies. Although there is a softer nudge than in the previous example, it should be emphasized that this example is also manipulative.

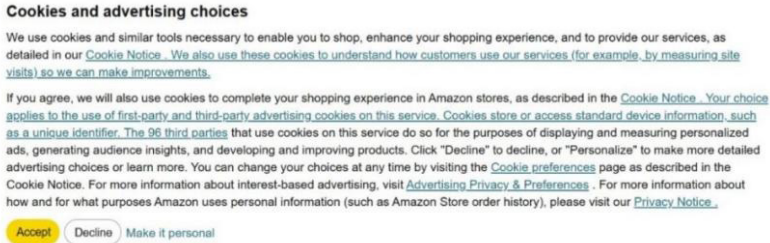


Figure 7. An example of a manipulative cookie wall prepared in accordance with the nudging technique (www.amazon.com, screenshot date 09/11/2024)

In Figure 7, which demonstrates a cookie preference wall, the checkboxes are designed in different colors. While a striking, bright color is used for the “Accept” option, the “Reject” option is rendered in a faint, pale color. This cannot be explained as a mere coincidence. Additionally, for users who wish to adjust their cookie settings, the option to do so is intentionally colored to blend with the background, making it deliberately difficult to notice.

Sitemizi kullanarak çerezlere (cookie) izin vermektedirsiniz. Detaylı bilgi için [Çerez Politika](#)ımızı inceleyebilirsiniz.

Figure 8. Example of a cookie wall without option prepared contrary to ethical principles (www.ikea.com.tr, screenshot date 10/11/2024)

In the cookie notification wall example in Figure 8, it is seen that users are not given any option to “accept”, “reject” or “take to settings”. Therefore, users are assumed to accept cookies directly. This is highly contrary to the legal and ethical framework.

Çerez Bilgilendirmesi

Bu internet sitesinde, sizlere daha iyi hizmet sunabilmek ve kullanımı kolaylaştırabilmek amacıyla çerezler "cookie" kullanılmaktadır. Çerezler, web sayfalının kullanıcıları tanıması, sitenin içeriğinin iyileştirilmesi ve geliştirilmesi amacıyla kişisel verilerinizi toplamaktadır. Çerezlerle verdiğiniz izni [buraya](#) tıklayarak veya web sitesinde her sayfanın altında bulabileceğiniz Çerez Politikası sayfasında yer alan bağlantı yoluyla her zaman düzenleyebilirsiniz. Detaylı bilgiye ulaşmak için lütfen [tıklayınız](#)

Çerez Ayarlarını Yapılandır

Tümünü Reddet

Tümünü Kabul Et

Figure 9. An example of a non-manipulative option cookie wall prepared within the framework of ethical principles (www.thenorthface.com.tr, screenshot date 09/11/2024)

The example in Figure 9 and Figure 10 features a rare design, as all options regarding cookies are displayed in boxes of the same color. There is also no manipulative trickery in the ordering of the options, with the “Accept” button placed last as a clear indication.

Çerezleri kullanıyoruz

Web sitemizde gezinme deneyiminizi geliştirmek, size kişiselleştirilmiş içerik ve hedefli reklamlar göstermek, web sitesi trafiğimizi analiz etmek ve ziyaretçilerimizin nereden geldiğini anlamak için çerezleri ve diğer izleme teknolojilerini kullanıyoruz.

Çerezleri Yönet

Tümünü Reddet

Tümünü Kabul Et

Figure 10. An example of a non-manipulative option cookie wall prepared within the framework of ethical principles (www.themoosebay.com, screenshot date 10/11/2024)

As seen, the power of design to manipulate individuals into acting in certain ways and making specific choices is quite strong. Despite people's inclination to see themselves as rational and autonomous in the face of technology, it is essential to recognize the profound influence of the synergy between technology and design on personal preferences and decisions, avoiding the trap of technological determinism. Awareness alone is insufficient; concrete action and greater consciousness are required to combat these forces that covertly serve data surveillance, attention exploitation, and the limitation of free will.

Jonathan Crary, in his work “24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep”, discusses the concept of the attention economy within the framework of capitalism’s project to keep consumers perpetually awake “24/7.” Sleep conflicts with the demands and interests of this nonstop flow of information, serving as a time when individuals can resist false needs and interrupt consumption. However, contemporary capitalism is constantly seeking ways to intervene in sleep, reduce its duration, or exploit it (Crary, 2015, p. 21). Studies indicate a growing number of people voluntarily wake up at intervals during the night to check messages, notifications, and emails, sacrificing sleep for increased consumption. People now remain in a standby mode like low-energy electronics, with every measure taken to prevent complete rest. Even sleep time is a costly liability in modern capitalism (Crary, 2015, pp. 23-24). Surveillance capitalists have even targeted sleep, using new technology to gather behavioral data during fragmented sleep. The root issue lies in people voluntarily sacrificing their sleep and participating in data surveillance. Monitored around the clock, individuals meekly allow their thoughts, desires, behaviors, entertainment, and needs to be imposed externally (Crary, 2015, p. 65). Screens are filled with engaging content and desirable items they dream of purchasing, making it hard for individuals—far more controlled by their emotions and desires than they realize—to resist the fantasy of abundant commodities.

“The effectiveness of 24/7 lies primarily in the incompatibility it reveals—between the human lifeworld and a universe akin to a cosmos activated by a button, but one that has no off-switch. ... Now that there is no moment, place, or situation in which one cannot shop, consume, or access network resources, 24/7—a time that is not truly a time—ruthlessly invades every aspect of social and private life” (Crary, 2015, p. 40).

In his book “Stolen Focus: Why You Can’t Pay Attention and How to Think Deeply Again”, Johann Hari (2022, p. 112) compares surveillance capitalists to magicians who discover people’s weaknesses and use them to manipulate. Yet, unlike magicians, the purpose of surveillance

capitalists is not merely to entertain; entertainment is only a means to an end. Their primary goal is to exploit individuals' vulnerability to attention deficits, collecting behavioral data under the guise of enjoyment and freedom, and using this data to shape future choices and decisions to serve their own interests. For instance, the longer users spend online or get distracted by ads appearing on the screen, the more profit surveillance capitalists like Google make (Hari, 2022, p. 116). The ability to focus and maintain attention is dulled by these companies, which prevent users from pausing to think for even a few seconds, trapping them in a cycle of clicks. Our attention is manipulated, sold to the highest-bidding advertisers (Hari, 2022, p. 162).

Is it still possible, then, to resist the manipulation of rational thinking and attention skills? It is essential to understand that this issue goes far beyond simple opposition to or support of technology. In a time when attention is eroded and often channeled toward consumption, blaming the internet, algorithms, or devices alone would obscure the root of the problem. What truly matters is exposing the forces and vested interests behind this technology.

Hari (2022, pp. 170-171) rejects claims that challenging these invisible powers is a futile effort stemming from learned helplessness and instead argues for a collective movement against surveillance capitalism—armed with invasive technologies that collect our data and manipulate our attention. The privacy violations experienced by millions of individuals who think they still make decisions of their own free will in online environments are merely previews of what lies ahead. Therefore, a movement prioritizing the individual and their freedom, demanding technologies that respect rather than undermine autonomy and attention, is urgently needed.

Surveillance capitalists justify the trade-off of privacy as a fair price for a personalized user experience, as well as optimized products and services. The core rationale for surveillance is the need for abundant data to effectively and efficiently serve individuals' needs and demands. For instance, Google's primary objective is to anticipate and answer users'

needs even before they ask. Although big data enables accurate predictions, users increasingly become puppets of an expanding mechanism of control and domination. Surveillance capitalists, who profit from behavioral predictions, can be likened to modern-day fortune tellers, wielding the power to predict, influence, and steer future behaviors. These predictions, however, gradually become chains that restrict individuals' self-determination and, ultimately, their freedom (Hendricks and Vestergaard, 2019, pp. 126-130). Consequently, it is impossible to view technological progress as a purely positive advancement for humanity. The exploitation of attention online and the automation of choices, decisions, and deliberate guidance through sophisticated techniques transform data surveillance into a routine ritual, and the fantasy-like spectacle of personalized products and services presented through targeted ads leaves deep wounds on individuals' virtual privacy.

According to Rosa (2022, pp. 45-46), most defining characteristics inherent to modernity inevitably give rise to their opposites. For example, the rise of rationality brings with it the worry of an iron cage of domination, the rise of individualism brings anxiety about mass culture, and the celebration of diversity brings fears of anomie. Similarly, the acceleration that characterizes modernity also brings with it slowness, inertia, and inactivity. Virilio (2000, p. 76) claims that humanity, swept up in the violence of speed, is essentially going nowhere, standing still. Excessive acceleration, according to Virilio (2000, p. 124), leads to a pathological stasis, spreading laziness, lethargy, and apathy. Thus, despite constant change tied to speed, it is possible to argue that there is no meaningful progress and no clear destination (Rosa, 2022, p. 46). The inertia and apathy observed in individuals due to this acceleration are also evident in terms of online surveillance and privacy. Captured by the endless stimuli (especially targeted ads) flashing before them in the online world every second, consumers find it hard to break free once they are drawn into the rhythm of infinite scrolling. The allure of personalized content, sophisticated webpage designs, and notification boxes presented through algorithms traps users, and for those who engage almost playfully in data surveillance, the desire for instant gratification often overshadows

concerns about data privacy. As Rosa (2022, p. 66) notes, acceleration, which imposes a dominant influence on individuals’ actions and decisions, affecting all aspects of life and making critical reflection or resistance more difficult, could be seen as the new face of totalitarianism. Ultimately, the difficulty in internalizing the importance of data privacy, the alienation from privacy, and the apathy toward surveillance create a society of apathetic consumers, a product of late modernity.

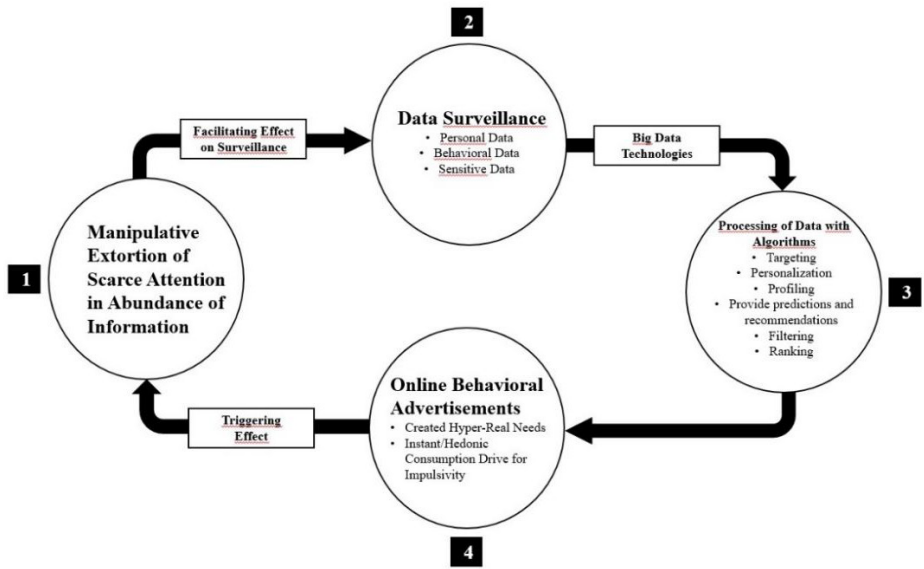


Figure 11. The vicious cycle of attention and data exploitation based surveillance (created by the author)

The vicious cycle of attention and data exploitation illustrated in Figure 11 (created by the author) is significant as it includes the often-overlooked phase of attention exploitation in the surveillance process. This step facilitates a smoother and easier data surveillance process, where collected data is processed through big data technologies, revealing unique patterns about individuals. This is akin to the process of refining raw diamonds into polished gems; it results in targeted behavioral advertising that creates hyper-real needs, triggering hedonic or compulsive consumption impulses.

The Asymmetry of Transparency and the Troubling State of Privacy

Privacy, by its nature, is a normative concept that is deeply rooted in philosophical, legal, sociological, political, and economic traditions. It is inherently ambiguous and multi-dimensional, making it challenging to define. Early discussions on privacy trace back to Aristotle's distinction between public and private spheres. Since then, literature has developed an understanding of the adverse consequences of privacy infringements, which have been addressed within legal frameworks (Nissim and Wood, 2018, p. 2-3).

In general terms, privacy concerns how well individuals are known by others, their level of physical accessibility, and the degree to which they attract the interest and attention of others (Yüksel, 2009, p. 277). The concept is primarily examined across three dimensions: spatial (territorial) privacy, personal privacy, and informational/data privacy. Spatial or territorial privacy refers to the protection of the immediate physical space surrounding an individual. Personal privacy involves safeguarding individuals against physical or psychological intrusions, while informational/data privacy, as the term suggests, pertains to the control over the collection, storage, processing, and dissemination of personal data to third parties (Fischer-Hübner, 1998, p. 422).

Westin (1967, pp. 52-60) identifies three primary variables that threaten privacy: the level of self-disclosure, voyeuristic curiosity, and surveillance. Individuals' privacy is not always violated by others; individuals may consciously choose to reveal their own privacy. Curiosity, as a human impulse, is indeed privacy's greatest enemy. It is a constant element of social life and can even drive aggressive attempts to penetrate the secrets of others. Surveillance, as a control mechanism with functions such as enforcing social norms and ensuring citizen safety, is the most widespread cause of privacy infringement. Surveillance plays a significant role in disrupting and undermining the meaning of privacy (Çakır, 2015, p. 345). It is an instrumental power that benefits specific groups and corporations at the expense of penetrating individuals' freedoms and

privacy. Ultimately, capitalism and its agents, who require anonymity and privacy for their own continuity, perpetuate surveillance by undermining clients' privacy rights in their drive to know as much as possible about them for capital accumulation (Fuchs, 2020, pp. 275-276).

Long before the advent of the digital age, when computers and the web were yet to be born, Alan Westin (1967, p. 158) examined privacy in terms of data/information confidentiality, defining privacy as the condition wherein individuals, groups, or institutions personally determine when, how, and to what extent information about themselves is shared with others. The computer revolution, which brought the tremendous benefit of data processing capabilities, enabled the rapid, inexpensive storage, processing, and distribution of large datasets, thus sounding the alarm for privacy risks. In his 1971 work "The Assault of Privacy: Computers, Data Banks, and Dossiers," Arthur R. Miller cautioned about the data-processing and storage power of computers, noting that they could form the "heart of a monitoring system that would transform society into a transparent world" (Vincent, 2017, p. 179). In the digital era, the collection, storage, and processing of personal data to enable more realistic, rational, and predictable decision-making has led to widespread public concerns over privacy. Data analysis has deeply and irreversibly permeated almost every aspect of life, from social networks to e-commerce, healthcare, and security. These analyses are fed not only by data reflecting individuals' personality traits, relationships, interests, tastes, and preferences but also by sensitive data, such as financial situations or political inclinations. The misuse or exposure of such data has the potential to create far-reaching, undesirable consequences for fundamental rights and social values, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, and respect for private and family life (Nissim and Wood, 2018, pp. 1-2). Therefore, each groundbreaking communication revolution initially sparked major concerns, yet the difference with computerization lies in the speed and radical nature of change (Vincent, 2017, p. 188). In this regard, it is clear that Westin's observations, which considered privacy from a data confidentiality perspective, have been proven correct over the years. The continuously evolving information society

technologies make it increasingly difficult to preserve privacy. As Dolgun (2015, p. 210) describes, all personal data of internet users, who are left vulnerable in the digital environment and referred to as “data-subjects,” have become a primary focus of surveillance. The concept of the public has undergone a shift, affecting the meaning of what is considered private and public by bringing most private aspects into the public sphere and making them available for consumption (Bauman and Lyon, 2020, p. 35).

Global Surveillance Industry and Serious Threat to Humanity

Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks (2013, p. 11), has emphasized that the internet, once liberating, has gradually transformed into the most terrifying tool of totalitarianism, with the world rapidly advancing toward a global dystopia. This quiet and insidious transformation, driven by the interests of the global surveillance industry, poses a serious threat to humanity. People often remain unaware or indifferent to what is happening behind the scenes while freely navigating the temples of data-hungry capitalist surveillance corporations. Edward Snowden, who exposed the operations of internet surveillance technologies by leaking information from the U.S. National Security Agency in 2013, explained his motivation by stating, “If mass surveillance is inherently present in daily life, then I wanted the dangers it poses and the harms it causes to be constantly known as well” (Snowden, 2020, p. 366). Following these revelations, digital giants such as Google, Apple, and Microsoft implemented strong encryption methods to protect data and made efforts to block third-party tracking, contributing to a relatively safer internet environment than that of the pre-2013 era (Snowden, 2020, p. 369).

The Case of Snowden has confronted many individuals with the fact that much of their digital data is easily accessible to governments, security agencies, and commercial enterprises. Applications like Google Assistant can make predictions based on users’ past searches, location data, and other information archived in their Gmail accounts. For example, this application can inform a user traveling about the weather at their

destination based on flight information or suggest the best hotels to stay at. However, these predictive functions of Google Assistant, which rely on monitoring and recording users' data, are perceived as unsettling by many users (Lupton, 2015, pp. 109-110).

In today's transparent and fluid postmodern societies, which have been digitalized through information and communication technologies, visibility in every sense has become widespread, simplified, and ordinary. In this era, when individuals are more inclined to expose themselves physically or informationally, surveillance has become an economic, political, and sociocultural activity (Çağan, 2019, pp. 43-44). In this context, individuals, captivated by the fantasy world of happiness and pleasure presented by consumer culture, have begun to participate willingly in surveillance.

Consumers generally participate happily in the personal information economy and the surveillance practices that support it. Despite criticisms of this system, they are willing to access the rewards and benefits within capitalism's "entertainment." Consequently, just as society and surveillance have become fluid, the act of consumption itself has become transient and driven by instant gratification. Despite growing concerns about privacy and confidentiality brought about by the intensification of consumer surveillance, consumption continues to maintain its allure (Pridmore, 2014, p. 326).

Considering the ability of countless companies and institutions to collect, store, and process personal data, consumers' ability to maintain their privacy and control over the flow of their own data has become problematic, leading to challenges in preserving confidentiality (Pridmore, 2014, p. 327). In addition to privacy concerns, there is a lack of corporate transparency regarding the amount of data collected on customers and corporate information practices. Although some aspects of this are outlined in privacy policies, most consumers remain uninformed about the extent and scope of transactions involving their personal data. The inability or unwillingness of consumers to understand the processes behind data processing activities creates and sustains asymmetrical

informational power balances. This power imbalance leaves consumers continually vulnerable to data exploitation (Pridmore, 2012, p. 328). In his work *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*, legal scholar Frank Pasquale uses the metaphor of a black box to describe this situation. Like a black box—a type of recording device that monitors and records various data in planes, trains, or automobiles—the operation of algorithmic decision-making processes is opaque, mysterious, and highly complex. While companies avoid transparently revealing the procedures and business practices of data processing processes used to influence individuals' decisions or choices, they do not hesitate to scrutinize potential customers' data in great detail. As these companies continue to gather increasing amounts of data about users, they also obstruct regulatory measures that would allow users even limited ownership over the unprecedented depth of digital data collected about them (Pasquale, 2015, pp. 3-4). Consequently, it can be argued that algorithmic decision-making processes and mechanisms, about which we lack insight, have created a deeply problematic black-box society in terms of transparency and accountability.

Han (2020, pp. 11-13) argues that the prevailing belief in transparency as a source of democracy, trust, and information freedom has become shaken in contemporary society. Although transparency is presented today as a means to establish trust, its primary aim is to create a society of control. In this society of control and surveillance, individuals voluntarily choose to make themselves transparent. In a digital surveillance society, freedom has become a hollow concept. The need for self-exposure, which comes with the unlimited freedom and communication offered by technology, has overcome the fear of revealing what is private and secret. In the ideology known as post-privacy, everything personal is demanded to be laid bare in the name of transparency. Transparency, imposed on the grounds of accelerating and stabilizing social systems and processes, has essentially become a tool for aligning and controlling society. The forced transparency imposed on individuals transforms them into components of the system (Han, 2020, p. 16).

Han (2020, p. 25) assesses today's exhibitionist society through the concepts of Walter Benjamin. According to Benjamin (2020, pp. 20-21), the most distinguishing feature of an artwork with a cultural value—meaning it possesses a special, unique atmosphere—over one intended solely for display is its inherent presence rather than mere visibility. The cultural value of such works is derived from their mere existence, not from being openly exhibited or displayed. For example, images or statues of the Virgin Mary, which have religious and sacred functions, are usually kept covered or made accessible only to specific individuals. The act of hiding and preserving these works out of sight endows them with cultural value. However, in today's society, existence is directly linked to being displayed and constantly in view. In the logic of a transparency society, there is no room for negative concepts such as distance, concealment, or privacy (Han, 2020, p. 30). Objects lose both their cultural value and aura—a term Benjamin frequently uses to define the unique presence and singularity of any entity—as they become commodified and exhibited. In capitalism, the value of exhibition has reached its peak (Han, 2020, p. 25). In this digital age of zero distance, individuals' privacy and personal space have been stripped of their aura and mystery (Han, 2023, p. 13). Han addresses the loss of cultural value and the rise of exhibition/display value by examining individuals' voluntary exhibition of their bodies and faces through social networks, which function as digital panopticons. In this exhibitionist society, where everything is displayed, exposed, and made transparent like merchandise in a marketplace, subjects advertise themselves and are evaluated based on their display value. Unlimited exhibitionism has turned everything into consumable commodities (Han, 2020, pp. 27-28).

On the other hand, this phenomenon can also be interpreted through the voluntary exposure of personal data. Personal data, like the body, has lost its uniqueness and aura, turning into commodities that are exposed, processed, and consumed by surveillance capitalist companies and then sold to others. The digital winds of the information society make everything it touches transparent in the pursuit of maximum profit and attention (Han, 2020, pp. 65-66). In this age, where transparency creates an il-

lusion of freedom, consumer individuals readily hand over their personal data to digital panopticons that direct, satisfy, and impose consumption as a tool for pleasure and distraction. Thus, “the transparent customer is the new prisoner of the digital panopticon, a homo sacer of sorts” (Han, 2020, p. 71) —a term coined by Giorgio Agamben referring to a sacred man, one beyond protection (Bora, 2022, p. 47). It has become increasingly difficult for individuals, who themselves have willingly become marketable commodities in consumer society (Bauman & Lyon, 2020, p. 47), to adopt a critical stance and step outside these panopticons. Platforms like Google and others normalize surveillance under the guise of freedom and encourage voluntary participation, making resistance challenging (Han, 2020, p. 72).

Ultimately, the significant impact of data processing on social and economic dynamics has given rise to an information regime as a form of domination. In this regime, it is not bodies or labor that are exploited, but information and data. Power is not acquired through ownership of the means of production but rather through surveillance technologies that predict and control individual behaviors in advance. Consequently, this information regime has transformed into surveillance capitalism today, directly linked to informational capitalism, which views people as mere data entities (Han, 2022, p. 7). In the free, creative, and participatory environment offered by the information regime, those being surveilled gain visibility, while the surveillers disappear from view (Han, 2022, p. 9). Unlike the confining nature of a disciplinary society, in the information regime, doors are wide open, and surveillance is conducted through communication networks. The effectiveness and efficiency of surveillance depend on individuals’ capacity to produce data. Thus, surveillance has become an illusion of freedom. On this plane, where freedom and surveillance walk hand in hand, the domination process unfolds perfectly without individuals even realizing it (Han, 2022, p. 10). In this digital prison, transparency is asymmetrical. The system of domination, managed by algorithmic systems, is itself opaque. However, the voluntary prisoners of the information regime are constantly demanded to share data and remain transparent. Surveillance, infiltrating daily life with ease,

creates an irresistible comfort zone and continues to map the details of our lives. While individuals' lives are meticulously monitored and recorded to control behavior, they fall under the illusion of freedom (Han, 2022, pp. 12-13). Individuals are no longer controlled by the oppressive and suppressive domination of disciplinary power but by the soft domination of the information regime, which entertains, stupefies, and renders them dependent (through consumption) (Han, 2022, p. 20). Thus, they are not merely victims or prisoners of data surveillance-based domination; they are also its willing participants. In this environment of digital vulnerability—where privacy walls are torn down without hesitation, everything is transformed into data by surveillance capitalists, distance disappears, and boundaries become permeable—individuals/consumers cannot escape being exploited through encouragement to consume (Han, 2021, pp. 33-35). As Virilio (2012, p. 58) noted, the new form of poverty brought about by the conditions of technological life is poverty of privacy—a society deprived of privacy, yet satisfied with its condition.

Conclusion

In light of all this, this article is based on the hypothesis that online behavioral advertisements, which are presented based on data collected, processed, and offering insights into future behaviors within the framework of surveillance capitalism, serve to create submissive and surveillance-accepting individuals (consumers) by imposing instant, hedonistic consumption. The main purpose of the article, in this context, is to discuss individuals' tendency to continue voluntary data exposure, rather than attempting to protect data privacy and confidentiality, in the face of online behavioral advertisements activated to guide their behaviors, decisions, and preferences in line with the commercial interests of surveillance capitalist companies, relating this tendency to the concepts of consumer culture and attention economy.

Accordingly, the primary aim of the article is to discuss individuals' tendencies to maintain voluntary data exhibitionism, rather than protecting data privacy and confidentiality, in the face of online behavioral ad-

vertisements deployed to influence behaviors, decisions, and preferences in line with the commercial interests of surveillance capitalist companies. This discussion is conducted in relation to the concepts of surveillance capitalism, consumer culture and the attention economy. This approach assumes that this set of concepts intersects and thus enriches the discussion. Especially drawing on Byung-Chul Han's (2021, p. 103) concept of "self-exploitation," this study seeks to elucidate the logic and dominant actors of this surveillance system and aims to better understand the dynamics that have turned surveillance into a new field of inquiry in a digitized society.

Also, this article highlights the urgent need for awareness and action in protecting data privacy/confidentiality against the potential dangers of data surveillance and the manipulative data collection tactics of surveillance capitalists. It is suggested that individuals, whose lives are increasingly mediated by these insidious surveillance technologies that undermine their free will and privacy, must gain a certain level of mastery over this field, despite its complexity, technical nature, and difficulty in understanding. In response to this growing exploitation mechanism that thrives under the guise of liberation rhetoric, the responsibilities and proposed solutions for users/consumers and service providers should be prioritized and brought to the forefront.

It has been discussed, at a theoretical level, the legitimization and normalization of digital data surveillance through behavioral advertisements in the online digital environment, which is concretized by consumers' voluntary participation, and their tendency to actively engage in this process. The discussion is framed around the concepts of attention economy and consumption culture. The dominance of big data technologies and predictive algorithms in the marketing sector has made it impossible to ignore the impact of targeting, profiling, and offering personalized products/services through advertisements on attention, consumption, and consumer society and culture.

The process that begins with the capture of consumer attention ultimately leads to a vicious cycle between attention, data, and consumption.

These dynamics are not only based on individual consumer preferences but also on the influence of global marketing strategies and digital advertising. As a tool of consumption culture in the digital age, behavioral advertisements, as well as other content and notifications that encourage consumption, contribute to the capture of attention and, consequently, to the delivery of personal data to surveillance capitalists. While digital advertising exposes how consumer personal data and preferences are commodified, this process also jeopardizes users' data privacy.

Thus, it is argued that behavioral advertisements, along with other seductive content and notifications, which have become the new favored tools of consumption culture in the digital era, effectively create a consumer base whose attention is captive, who is prepared for consumption, and who willingly surrenders their data to surveillance capitalists.

Consumers often unknowingly share their data in exchange for the convenience offered to them, thereby voluntarily becoming part of this system. A particularly contentious issue is the practice of obtaining explicit consent for service access through manipulative techniques that compel users to accept cookies via notification boxes far removed from ethical standards. Concrete examples such as manipulative web design techniques and cookie wall architectures, which possess the potential to hook attention, trigger consumption, and undermine the motivation to preserve data privacy, are provided.

To better understand the effects of digital advertising, the article examines how the marketing sector directs users through click traps, distracts their attention with specific techniques, and collects their data. This situation also points to the lack of transparency between surveillance capitalists and data providers in the democratic society of the digital age. The asymmetrical transparency between the watchers and the watched in this online phantasmagoric universe of commodities and consumption is highlighted. Finally, it discusses the relationship between attention and privacy in the digital age in line with the concepts of Byung-Chul Han and Walter Benjamin, emphasizing the need to protect individual privacy.

In today's consumers, whose free will is weakened by attention-grabbing stimuli, we can see behavior similar to the animals in Skinner's operant conditioning experiment. They are guided by easily collected and processed data, responding predictably based on their limited and weak attention in the face of an overwhelming flow of messages. Through the collection and processing of data, attention is captured, and targeting and personalization are carried out. As long as the advertising industry remains at the helm of this process, data privacy and confidentiality will always be serious concerns. Manipulative designs, which nudge attention, lead to privacy agreements accepted without reading, unconscious cookie preferences, or consent notifications. They result in data access granted through unconscious memberships to every site visited or app downloaded, and with each advertisement for a consumption object, the entire cycle becomes normalized as part of the digital era. Ultimately, even clicking on a single targeted behavioral ad comes at the cost of wasted time, distracted attention, heightened consumption, and ultimately, the normalization of data surveillance. Recognizing the irrationality of this vicious cycle and taking even the smallest step toward awareness is invaluable. At the very least, consumers must stop underestimating the potential consequences of their data being used in ways they do not fully understand (identity theft, ransomware, data trading on the dark web) and begin to consider these risks seriously. In addition to individual responsibility and precautions, the main point that should be emphasized is the inevitable necessity for digital service provider platforms to "realistically and sincerely" limit their commercial and arbitrary practices in data collection, processing, and distribution. The pressure on digital platforms should be increased to ensure they are more accountable, transparent, and clear in protecting online privacy, and to ensure they comply with laws and regulations. Methods of data collection, processing, and storage should be clearly explained to users. Privacy policies should be clear and concise, and platforms must be honest about the purpose of data collection and its sharing practices.

The designs that encourage users to accept cookies as they are and automatically provide consent must be addressed legally and subject to

enforcement. It is essential to prevent surveillance capitalists and attention merchants, who claim to leave users free in their choices and preferences, from exploiting this legal gap to manipulate through design. Formulating example design guidelines, ensuring collective compliance, and implementing deterrent sanctions are potential regulatory measures. It is necessary to rethink the purpose and nature of advertising and develop a digital advertising ethics based on transparency and accountability.

If a future where big data and algorithms steer minds more toward consumption and virtual happiness is to be avoided, it must be reminded every day that cookies are not as tasty as in real life, that data does not disappear into the atmosphere, but is instead meticulously processed to add wealth to someone else's fortune. Becoming obedient epsilons of the digital world should not be the fate of consumers.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study was carried out in accordance with principles of research and publication ethics.

Contribution of the Authors

Author 1's contribution to the article is 60% and Author 2's contribution to the article is 40%.

Statement of Support

This work was financially supported by the TUBITAK BİDEB 2210/A National MSc/MA Scholarship Program.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest for this study.

Bibliography

- Bauman, Z. ve Lyon, D. (2020). *Akışkan gözetim*. (E. Yılmaz, Çev.). İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Benjamin, W. (2020). *Pasajlar*. (A. Cemal, Çev.). İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Bertman, P. (1998). *Hyperculture: The human cost of speed*. Westport: Praeger.
- Crary, J. (2015). *7/24 Geç kapitalizm ve uykuların sonu*. (N. Çatlı, Çev.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Bora, C. B. (2022). Agamben ve homo sacer. *KARE- International Journal of Comparative literature* 14, 47-56.
- Çağan, K. (2019). *Postmodernizm ve mahremiyetin dönüşümü*. Ankara: Pruva Yayınları.
- Çakır, M. (2015). *İnternette gösteri ve gözetim: Eleştirel bir okuma*. Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi.
- Cloarec, J. (2020). The personalization-privacy paradox in the attention economy. *Technological forecasting & social change* 161, 1-7.
- Dolgun, U. (2015). *Şeffaf hapisane yahut gözetim toplumu: Küreselleşen dünyada gözetim, toplumsal denetim ve iktidar ilişkileri*. İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları.
- Drouin, M., Kaiser, D. H., & Miller, D. A. (2012). Phantom vibrations among undergraduates: Prevalence and associated psychological characteristics. *Computers in human behaviour*, 28, 1490-1496.
- Fischer-Hübner, S. (1998). Privacy and security at risk in the global information society. *Information, communication & society* 1(4), 420-441.
- Fuchs, C. (2020). *Sosyal medya: Eleştirel bir giriş*. (D. Saraçoğlu & İ. Kalaycı, Çev.). İstanbul: Nota Bene Yayınları.
- Goldhaber, M. (1997, April 7). The attention economy and the net. *First*

- monday*, 2(4).[Available online at: <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/519/440>], Retrieved on : June 10, 2023.
- Gottschalk, S. (1999). Speed culture: Fast strategies in televised commercial ads. *Qualitative sociology*, 22(4), 311-329.
- Han, B.C. (2020). *Şeffaflık toplumu*. (H. Barışcan, Çev.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Han, B.C. (2022). *Enfokrasi: Dijitalleşme ve demokrasinin krizi*. (M. Özdemir, Çev.). İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları.
- Han, B.C. (2023). *Ötekini kovmak: Günümüzde toplum, algı ve iletişim*. (M. Özdemir, Çev.). İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları.
- Hari, J. (2022). *Çalınan dikkat: neden odaklanamıyoruz?* (B.E. Aksoy, Çev.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Hendricks, V. F. & Vestergaard, M. (2019). *Reality lost. Markets of attention, misinformation and manipulation*. Switzerland: Springer.
- Lupton, D. (2015). *Digital sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Nissim, K., & Wood, A. (2018). Is privacy privacy? *Berkman Klein Center Research publication*, 5, 1-17.
- Pasquale, F. (2015). *The black box society: The secret algorithms that control money and information*. Massachusetts, CA: Harvard University Press.
- Pettman, D. (2017). *Sonsuz dikkat dağınıklığı: Gündelik yaşamda sosyal medyaya odaklanmak*. (Y. Çetin, Çev.). İstanbul: Sel Yayınları.
- Pridmore, J. (2014). Consumer surveillance: Context, perspectives and concerns in the personal information economy. In K. Ball, K. D. Haggerty, & D. Lyon (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of surveillance studies* (pp. 321–329). London: Routledge.
- Rosa, H. (2022). *Yabancılaşma ve hızlanma: Geç modern zamansallığına dair bir eleştirel teoriye doğru*. (B. Konuk, Çev.). İstanbul: Albaraka Yayınları.

- Selinger, E. & Whyte, K. (2011). Is there a right way to nudge? The practice and ethics of choice architecture. *Sociology compass*, 5(10), 923-935.
- Simon, H. A. (1971). Designing organizations for an information-rich world. In M. Greenberger (Ed.), *Computers, communications, and the public interest* (pp. 37-72). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.
- Snowden, E. (2020). *Sistem hatası*. (G. Arkan, Çev.). İstanbul: Epsilon Yayınevi.
- Terranova, T. (2012). Attention, economy and the brain. *Culture Machine*, 13, 1-19.
- Tomlinson, J. (2007). *The culture of speed: the coming of immediacy*. London: SAGE.
- Vincent, D. (2017). *Mahremiyet: kısa bir tarih*. (D. Cumhuri, Çev.). Ankara: Epos Yayınları.
- Virilio, P. (2000). *Polar inertia*. (P. Camiller, Trans.). Thousand Oaks, California and London: SAGE Publications.
- Virilio, P. (2012). *The great accelerator*. (J. Rose, Trans.). Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Virilio, P. (2021). *Hız ve politika*. (M. Cansever, Çev.). İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.
- Westin, A. (1967). *Privacy and freedom*. New York: IG Publishing.
- Wu, T. (2021). *Dikkat tacirleri: İnsan zihnine girmek için verilen amansız mücadele*. (B. Karal, Çev.). İstanbul: The Kitap.
- Wu, T. (2016). *The attention merchants: The epic scramble to get inside our heads*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Zuboff, S. (2021). *Gözetim kapitalizmi çağı: Gücün yeni sınırında insan geleceği için savaş*. (T. Uzunçelebi, Çev.). İstanbul: Okuyan Us Yayınevi.

Genişletilmiş Özet**Dijital Kapitalizm Çağında Dikkat Ekonomisinin
Evrimi: Dijital Verilerin Gözetimi ve Tüketim
Davranışlarının Manipülasyonu**

Bu çalışma, dijital ortamda dikkatin yönlendirilmesi yoluyla elde edilen kişisel verilerin gözetim kapitalizmi mantığıyla işlenerek gelecekteki davranışlara ilişkin içgörü sunan verilere dayanarak sunulan çevrim içi davranışsal reklamlara dönüştüğü; bu reklamların ise bireyleri anlık ve haz temelli tüketim-e yönlendirerek gözetimi içselleştirmiş, edilgen tüketiciler inşa ettiği varsayımından yola çıkmıştır. Temel amaç, veri gözetimi yoluyla bireylerin davranış, karar ve tercihlerini gözetim kapitalisti şirketlerin ticari çıkarları doğrultusunda yönlendirebilmek amacıyla devreye sokulan çevrimiçi davranışsal reklamlar karşısında bireylerin, veri gizliliği ve mahremiyeti korumaya çalışmak yerine gönüllü veri teşhirciliğini sürdürme eğilimlerini, tüketim kültürü ve dikkat ekonomisi kavramlarıyla ilişkilendirerek tartışmaktır. Byung-Chul Han'ın (2021, s. 103) tabiriyle “öz-sömürü” nün hâkim olduğu bu gözetim sistemin mantığının ve başat aktörlerinin ortaya koyulmaya çalışıldığı bu çalışmayla, gözetimi dijitalleşen toplumda yeni bir inceleme alanı haline getiren dinamiklerin daha iyi anlaşılması hedeflenmektedir.

Dijitalleşme süreciyle birlikte gözetim olgusu hem biçimsel hem de işlevsel olarak dönüşmüş, klasik panoptik yapıların yerini akışkan, esnek ve merkeziyetsiz post-panoptik gözetim biçimleri almıştır. Bu dönüşüm, teknolojik değişimin yanı sıra gözetimin kapitalizmle olan ilişkisine dair köklü bir yeniden yapılanmayı da beraberinde getirmiştir. Özellikle verinin ekonomik bir hammaddeye dönüşmesiyle birlikte gözetim, bireylerin davranışlarına ve dikkatine odaklanan, ticarî çıkarlarla şekillenen bir sistem haline gelmiştir. Shoshana Zuboff'un (2021) “gözetim kapitalizmi” olarak adlandırdığı bu sistem, bireylerin sanal ortamdaki deneyimlerinin, öngörü temelli bir değer üretim sürecine dahil edilmesini ifade etmektedir. Çevrim içi davranışsal reklamlar, yalnızca bir pazarlama stratejisi olarak değil, aynı zamanda dijital gözetimin en görünür çıktısı haline gelmiş durumdadır. Reklamcılığın yeni yüzü olarak tanımlanabilecek olan çevrim içi davranışsal reklamlar, hedefleme temelli algoritmalar aracılığıyla bireylerin dikkatini ve verisini eş zamanlı olarak ticarileştiren bir yapıya sahiptir. Kullanıcıların diji-

tal ayak izleri, algoritmik yapılar tarafından işlenerek kişiselleştirilmiş reklam içeriklerine dönüştürülmekte; bu süreçte dikkat ve veri eşzamanlı olarak ticarileştirilmektedir. Günümüz dijital platformlarında kullanıcıların gerçekleştirdiği her tıklama, her gezinme hareketi bir veri üretimine neden olurken aynı zamanda kullanıcıların dikkatini ele geçirme mücadelesi dikkat ekonomisi kavramını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Tıpkı veri gibi dikkat de kıt, değerli ve ekonomik bir sermaye haline gelmiştir. Tim Wu'nun (2021) "dikkat tüccarları" olarak tanımladığı dijital platformlar, kullanıcıların dikkatini en etkili şekilde yakalamayı ve bu dikkati reklamverenlere satmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda gözetim kapitalizmi verinin yanı sıra dikkatin de eş zamanlı sömürüsüne dayalı bir ekonomik modeli temsil etmektedir. Kullanıcıların veri üretimine gönüllü katılımını sağlayan dikkat manipülasyonu, özellikle üçüncü taraf çerezlerin kabulü ya da karmaşık gizlilik politikalarının sorgusuz onaylanması gibi dijital davranışlarla gözlemlenmektedir. Bireylerin dikkatlerinin yönlendirilmesiyle ortaya çıkan bu davranışlar dolayısıyla veri toplama süreçleri neredeyse görünmez bir hal almakta ve sıradanlaştırılmaktadır. Bu durum, bireylerin veri mahremiyetine yönelik endişeleri ile dijital hizmetlerden faydalanma arzuları arasında sürekli bir gelgit yaratmakta; literatürde "gizlilik paradoksu" olarak tanımlanan ikilemi doğurmaktadır.

Dijital toplumda hızın başat değer haline gelmesi, bireylerin belirli bir konuya odaklanma, durup düşünme ve rasyonel karar verme yetisini zayıflatmaktadır. Paul Virilio'nun (2021, s.134) "hız arttıkça özgürlük azalır" ifadesi bu bağlamda değerlidir. Sonsuz bilgi akışı, gösterge bolluğu ve kesintisiz uyaranlarla çevrili dijital ortam, bireyin bilişsel kapasitesini baskılayarak, onu daha fazla tüketime ve daha fazla veri paylaşımına teşvik etmektedir. Gözetimin bu yeni biçimi tüketicilere hız ve haz vadeder hale gelmiştir.

Hedefli reklamlarla görünürlük kazanan ticari minvaldeki dijital veri gözetiminin var olan mahremiyet endişelerine rağmen gündelik hayatın sıradan bir parçası haline gelmesi ve kanıksanması noktasında dikkat ekonomisi ve tüketim kültürünün rolü teorik düzlemde tartışılmıştır. Dolayısıyla söz konusu çalışma kuramsal bir perspektife dayalı olarak hazırlanmış olup yöntem olarak literatür ve belge taraması tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Söz konusu yöntemin tercih edilmesinin altında yatan sebep, Türkiye'de dijital veri gözetimine ilişkin teorik çalışmaların disiplinlerarası analiz ve tartışma açısından eksik ve sayıca az oluşu sebebiyle mevcut boşlukları doldurmaya katkı sağlayabilmektir. Ayrıca dijital veri gözetimine sosyoloji penceresinden bakarak çoğunlukla gözden

kaçırılan değişkenlerin bütüncül bir şekilde ele alınıp birleştirilmesiyle bir zihin haritası ortaya koyulmuştur.

Çevrim içi dünyada, hızlandırılmış ve dikkat çekici bir akış içinde, “beni tıkla” diye göz kırpan sayısız iletiyle karşılaşmaktadır. Bu yoğun uyarıcı ortamda dikkatler sürekli kesintiye uğratılmakta ve sömürülmekte; bu nedenle kullanıcılar, veri gözetimine karşı savunmasız hâle gelmekte ve hedefli reklamların ağına takılarak aynı döngü içinde sürüklenmektedir. Dikkat tacirlerinin etkisiyle zihinsel yorgunluk yaşayan bireyler, sanal alışveriş merkezine dönüşen ekranlarda reklam içeriklerinin kuşatmasından kaçamamaktadır. Odaklanma becerisinin, kişisel verilerin, veri gizliliği hakkının ve genel olarak bireysel yaşamların dijital ortamda ticarileştirildiği bu baştan çıkarıcı düzende, gözetim süreci sıradan ve katlanılabilir bir olgu hâline gelmektedir. Gizliliğe ilişkin kaygılar ortaya çıktığında bile, dijital dünyanın sunduğu kolaylıklardan mahrum kalma korkusu çoğu zaman daha baskın hâle gelmektedir.

Algoritmalarla beslenen büyük veri sistemleri, bireyleri daha fazla tüketime yönlendirmekte; tüketim davranışlarını biçimlendirmektedir. Bauman’ın işaret ettiği üzere, sistemin dışında kalmak yerine “geçerli” bir tüketici olabilmek arzusu, bu yönlendirmeyi daha da güçlendirmektedir. Tüketim aracılığıyla aidiyet hissinin sürdürüldüğü bir düzende, kişiselleştirilmiş çevrim içi reklam içerikleri arasında gezinmek, gözetim sürecine karşı daha edilgen bir tutum gelişmesine neden olmaktadır. Gözetim sistemine yönelik eleştiriler ise çoğu zaman sistemin içinden yükselmekte; Tristan Harris örneğinde olduğu gibi, bazı teknoloji uzmanları tarafından sürecin perde arkası ifşa edilmektedir. Ancak bu tür eleştirilerin ardından dahi, Tomlinson’un (2007) belirttiği gibi, hız kültürü ve dolaylımsızlık tarafından biçimlendirilen bireysel refleksler, kullanıcıları tekrar algoritmik yönlendirmeler doğrultusunda içerik tüketimine yöneltmektedir. Dijital ortamda özgür ve bilinçli bir duruş sergilenebilmesi için, çerezlerin (cookies) masum olmadığı; kişisel verilerin sistematik biçimde işlenerek ekonomik değere dönüştürüldüğü gerçeği sürekli hatırd tutulmalıdır. Aksi takdirde, dijital dünyanın edilgen ve itaatkar kullanıcılarına dönüşmek kaçınılmaz hâle gelebilecektir.

Gözetimin salt bir güvenlik meselesi olarak değil, aynı zamanda ticarî çıkarlar doğrultusunda yönlendirilen bir tüketim stratejisi olarak da işlev gördüğüne ilişkin sunulan kuramsal analiz doğrultusunda dijital gözetim, dikkat ekonomisi ve tüketim kültürü etkileşimi üzerine gelecekte yapılması muhtemel

ampirik arařtırmalara yenilikçi anlamda teorik bir zemin sunmak ve dijital mahremiyet konusunda farkındalık geliřtirmek de alıřmanın amaları arasındadır.