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Social networks and advertising: the allies of hyperconsumption that warms the planet



Sources: El salto [Image: ÁLVARO MINGUITO]

When the algorithms of social networks try to steal more time from the user, they only serve a single purpose: that of generating great benefits for large technology companies, investors and advertisers. There is a need to regulate algorithms and commercial advertising in the face of technoligarch danger.

If in these past days you have decided to make any of your Christmas shopping via the internet is likely to have since then has begun to receive advertising impacts in the form of inserts, already be *it banners* or *storie s*, every time you open one application or perform an online search. This is something that will already be experienced by anyone who habitually buys on the internet or who, Simply, like many other millions of people, he

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makes use of the networks. Social. So far there is nothing new. The problem is that they will have been given He says they start to get some pressure in the form of more impacts. advertising commercials, as well as offers of many other products related to an assumed taste and economic status that the algorithm understands that you have through your activity in some *type app* Instagram, that is, from the *likes* and visits of Profiles.

Surely, lately you have received publicity of the sales and you can that is considering buying something, will not be that you lose this "opportunity" to save a few euros. We recently left Black Friday behind, the Christmas and Kings shopping has made the accounts suffer, just over that new invention of the technological Blue Monday to "alleviate sadness" and, to the Just around the corner, the traditional Valentine's Day is already looming. Of some The way you feel in the environment the pressure and a kind of whisper that tells us constantly: "Buy... buy...".

During the covid-19 crisis, social networks practically monopolized interactions and, therefore, digital companies saw their market power and capacity increase, giving rise to new business opportunities.

Ante este empacho de incitación al consumo, alguien profundamente preocupado por el calentamiento global se cuestionará con cierta inquietud cómo casa este frenesí consumista con las comunicaciones institucionales que exigen reducir la huella medioambiental y el consumo energético. En esta contradictoria coyuntura, el papel de la publicidad comercial parece jugar un rol fundamental resultando en motor de un sistema de consumo totalizador. Tal vez debamos empezar a señalar que, de manera silenciosa, la publicidad comercial es uno de los mayores contribuidores al calentamiento global en tanto que herramienta esencial del hiperconsumo.

A su vez, no cabe duda de que la influencia de las redes sociales, con sus contenidos e impactos publicitarios, ha significado un indisociable aliado que ha multiplicado su poder de persuasión y su rango de acción. Cabe preguntarse entonces cómo podremos vencer la lucha contra el cambio climático si toda nuestra sociedad vive inmersa en la concepción de un sistema negacionista del cambio climático cuyas dinámicas hegemónicas esencialmente giran por y para alentar el consumo constante soto pena de ahondar la crisis económica. Pero, ¿cómo funciona realmente este modelo de hiperconsumo y quiénes albergan el poder que se encarga de engranar la publicidad y el omnipresente sistema algorítmico a su servicio?

The use of applications and social networks is not free, only that the payment, as in that dystopian movie, 'In Time', is done in the form of time. The currency of exchange would be

time, a time of interaction that is being monetized and continuously perfected to multiply profits.

During the covid-19 crisis, social networks practically They monopolized interactions and, therefore, digital companies saw increase their market power and capacity giving rise to new opportunities for business. It was only the confirmation of a trend of social transformation that It makes us increasingly dependent on new technologies and the world digital. Beyond the pandemic juncture, data show that people He spends more and more time in front of the screens of his devices. The Coronavirus and lack of physical interaction were just the window of Opportunity for more portions of our vital time to end commodified and whose explanation lies in the commercial objectives of the Algorithms.

There is a hackneyed phrase that condenses this relationship of social networks and users: "When the product is free, the product is you." In reality, the Use of applications and social networks is not free, only that the payment, as in that dystopian film, *In Time*, it is performed in the form of time. The currency of exchange would be time, a time of interaction that is being monetized and continuously perfected to multiply profits. Paradoxically, the latest sociological changes show how time is being conceptualized by the individual as something that must be continuously monetized and, in this way, everyday life ends automatically inserting himself in business frameworks, what Jorge Moruno calls in his work *La Factory of the entrepreneur, the company-world*.

The neoliberal conception of reality has managed to translate the Industry and work, to our private environments and to our lives On a daily basis, thus subjugating our free time to the world of work, a time of which is no longer understood if it does not produce value in the mercantilist terms that It governs working-consumption capital. Our day to day, time truly ours, is understood as a niche market in accelerated times that, with Low wages and uncertainty of the future like the current one, urgent to reinvent oneself to add value to them.

They are literally stealing our time and technology through commercial advertising is getting rich with it.

The whiting that bites its tail. The pressure that is falling on the individual affects the conception of the social environment and defines the frameworks of Coexistence generating a conversion of reality that ends up being understood only in economic terms, that is, in terms of production and consumption. Weather Commodified free thus becomes added psychological pressure and ends by accelerating vital junctures, which can also be translated into mental health conditions. It is the consequence of a dissociation of

free time with that time conceived from profitability and which is expressed only in accelerated time devoted to frenetic consumption, either cultural products, such as travel or Netflix series, or either bodies on Tinder or material products, such as clothing or technology.

When social media algorithms try to steal more time from User only serves a single purpose: that of generating great benefits to the Big tech companies, investors and advertisers. In this equation, the data from Users are employed to increase those benefits through the monetization of your activity. How? Through the brand impacts that are show during activity on networks. These impacts take shape, by e.g. ads in the middle of a Youtube video or some content sponsored on Instagram, Twitter or Facebook. Thanks to usage data stored, the business *target* is perfectly limited in the required advertising parameters and an exposure window is offered for companies. The more people interact and the more time you spend In social networks, greater capacity of these to sell better spaces Where to insert the *marketing* campaigns of the companies. The Algorithms are designed to keep us as long as possible online interacting on social networks. They are literally stealing our Time and technology through commercial advertising are being enriching with it.

As we have seen, scientific calculations around the current rhythms of climate change always appear artificially accelerated by those who consume more and who, in turn, are the ones who accumulate the most wealth. Result Therefore, it is evident that the main focus of conflict is located in a manifest coordinates, i.e. where a social model is reinforced and Unequal and hyper-consumerist ideology as a reference.

We are facing a global pressure cooker of unmet basic needs, unfulfilled desires and denied aspirations.

However, it is likely that the magnitude of the efforts required to Dealing with such a problem is still difficult to deal with. encompass for a collective imaginary very delimited by a more ideologically and economically globalized than ever. Economic thinking neoliberal enjoys a hegemonic character and, therefore, to implement a alternative will first need to transcend the frames of an imaginary collective that has been shaped by the conception of the economy from prisms reductionists linked to hyperconsumption, profitability and competition in contexts of apparent scarcity. Current energy inflation and Food would be nothing more than the impact of the constant increase in margins. of profits of the relentless investment and venture capital funds on the Consumer pockets. In contexts such as the current usual Climate disasters where crops and raw materials are

seen directly affected, socio-economic pressure on the world population Poorer only tends to get worse. This is a global pressure cooker of unmet basic needs, unfulfilled desires and aspirations Denied.

Beyond basic consumption, it is true that today millions of people express and build their expectations and vital aspirations from identities that are reinforced by significant consumption and that are also transferred to the exposure of these through the networks. The production structure Global encourages diversification of individual preferences and leverages This opportunity to deliver new and diverse products with performance elder. The act of consuming is a political act that, in much of its sphere social and cultural, it also supposes an emulation of identities and status. By In the design of algorithms, the potential component of the Vital breakdown and fragmentation around consumption that, from Desires for differentiation markedly hierarchical, tries in vain to give Response to a global system of ultra-competitive social interaction. In addition the algorithms used by companies such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon or Facebook (Meta) has a marked ideological bias: they are not neutral, nor innocent. Human teams working on the design of certain algorithms use of the feedback arising from the massive extraction and cross-referencing of data that Users contribute from their online activity to draw patterns that serve to anticipate and reorient behaviors towards the generation of revenue.

Algorithms, advertising and hyper-consumption: a trident leading to the total privatisation of societies

At this point, the latest models of computer intelligence systems artificial are very useful. Through the information collected Constantly by the algorithmic multifunctional use, an improvement of the predictive capacity of systems on user actions in A process called *machine learning*, that is, the function that allows computers to autonomously relate patterns through the cross-check millions of data and improve its predictive calculation functionalities behavioural. These new means of production, in any case, can be observed from another perspective. As Karl Marx noted: "A cotton spinning machine is a cotton spinning machine. Only under certain conditions is it converted in capital". The problem would not lie in these processes, which perfectly They may be functional to the public interest, such as their objectives are subject to the constant revaluation of capital. Gradually, in a Paradoxical feedback exercise, both political institutions how common interactions would be privatized in a Collective remote control reorientation for commercial reconversion purposes. The Everyday life is captured within the economic frameworks and returned to the society in the form of capital domination, which, in short,

is a disturbance of social life and a restriction of freedom. Algorithms, advertising and Hyperconsumption: a trident leading to the total privatization of Societies.

It could well be said that, due to its primary role in the consumer economic system, advertising activity is the main tool of passive climate denialism and the largest active contributor to the climate crisis.

As mentioned, private algorithms that collect information from the activity on mobile applications, websites, e-commerce platforms and Social networks are designed with a single and unique purpose that is none other than that of multiply profits at the expense of user life time and extraction of your behavioral data. Amazon, for example, dedicates part of its Software improvement efforts to provoke consumer recidivism. Every Once a visitor enters your e-commerce platform, adjust what they see on your screen from data you have stored from other visits above, as well as the crossing of data with consumer profiles with a Similar categorization. The use of the platform and the purchases that are made They allow to improve the functions of the algorithm used by the system to Code consumers and manipulate purchasing behaviors. Know the type of person and form a psychological profile from the shopping cart allows both Amazon and many other companies to adjust the accuracy of their system, better categorize and customize the product offering that appears on screen.

In the case of social media companies, efforts are focused on achieve a higher loyalty rate, that is, in achieving reconversion of a longer time of interaction-exposure *online* in benefits monetary from advertisers and the parallel data market. By Consequently, more time spent on *online* presence comes to mean that a small group of tech companies can hoard more information about the psychological identities of your clients, as well as their age range, zip code—with encoding access implications approximate to a possible income range—cultural characteristics, and demographics, behavioral attitude, tastes or political beliefs among many Other sensitive data previously protected in the private sphere. With this information that the user himself contributes with the simple use of the applications, Parallel business is done with third parties and offered to potential Advertisers lucrative spaces with a higher target segmentation Precision where you can make effective product marketing impacts commercials thus achieving better ROI rates. This makes the platforms deregulated digital a huge focus of political power and manipulation of masses whose presence and influence does not stop growing. Publicity and surveillance, a lucrative business model that, as such, only seeks to multiply sales and earnings.

The regulation of advertising and the functionality of some algorithms should be part of a comprehensive plan for coordinating measures around the formation of new perspectives that serve to understand the economy in magnitude and coherence with the challenges of the century

The culture of consumption and ostentation, as competitive, generate winners and losers and thus expels the margins of society anyone who does not participate in its market dynamics based on the fragmentation and the mechanism of desire. Permanent dissatisfaction of desires leads to the constant need for significant consumption, hence the Advertising and the information stored by algorithms are the cornerstone of a structure that reflects a common system of meanings around Axes of inequality and social status that matter to business dynamics competitive to the day to day of people's private lives. In this way, The consumer economy uses the necessary commercial advertising to Generate a continuous production of symbolic material that seeks to be acquired to, in fact, satisfy the need for consumption of its signifiers associated intangibles and those of the act of consumption itself.

The dynamics of consumption of the symbolic that engages advertising work It contributes to the shaping of consumer myths and is the basis that governs the world economy. Business logic without democratic control serves the only Purpose of generating more private wealth regardless of the effects collateral about the environment or climate. For this reason, beyond the public intervention on business activities, regulation of advertising and the functionality of some algorithms should be part of a comprehensive plan for the coordination of measures relating to the formation of new perspectives that serve to understand the economy in magnitude and Coherence with the challenges of the century. It could well be said that, due to its Primary task in the consumer economic system, advertising activity It is the main tool of passive climate denialism and the greatest active contributor to the climate crisis. In addition, advertising is the Main way of whitewashing those companies that more responsibility They have in the acceleration of climate change and that, today, are served Strategically of commercial *greenwashing* to clean the Bad image of their current polluting business practices.

As consumers begin to better analyze purchases in Consistent with their environmental impact, companies are also reorienting their Corporate image towards environmental sustainability. At present, This already happens with different companies and multinationals that allocate part of the your income to generate a green image of your business activities. Good Part of the sponsoring companies of the World Climate Summits

are a Clear proof of this. The reinforcement of the intangibles of companies is the response to a forecast of changes in market dynamics that point to An economic reconversion that bets on investments in energy renewables and green projects against those polluting activities. The Institutional investments and government subsidies to enhance Emission reductions are presented as an opportunity for many companies who do not want to miss the opportunity to attract these funds. In any case, These rhetorical and image changes of many companies do not always imply a Real change in their polluting activities and, in many cases, it is the result of the aforementioned *greenwashing*, that is, an image whitening to present themselves to society as responsible companies in the fight against the climate crisis despite continuing to actively contribute to it.

The problem with new digital technologies and ambitious artificial intelligence programs is that their functions under private guidelines are not really reverting to general benefit.

It is well known that in a commodity economy production is not focuses on meeting people's basic needs to an extent that they can be considered consistent with the objective of fair resource allocation and with emission reduction forecast. On the contrary, waste and Consumerist waste fueled by advertising and algorithms, necessity of the factor of growing socio-economic inequality and the parallel disproportion Productive results in gears of an inextricable mechanism of Operation based on the imperative of short-term and high valuation profitability, private accumulation by majority dispossession and expansion Unlimited business. Decisions about what to produce and under what conditions They are usually left under the decision of a small class that owns capital. — investment funds— and, therefore, their objectives are relegated to their narrow interests of multiplying profitability. Therefore, the Private algorithms widely used in social networks and adjacent advertising commercial hegemonize a social structure of meanings that marks and redirects the frenetic dynamics of global consumption, while achieving its Ultimate objective of multiplying economic profits and distributing dividends for its shareholders. They are the results and fruits of what the sociologist Shoshana Zuboff called 'surveillance capitalism'.

At present, the crystallization of human behaviors in Millions of data and statistics for private use are completely beyond control democratic and, to the extent that algorithms are intermingled with Daily activities can become a serious problem of Restriction of freedoms. Over time, it will become more difficult to Dissociation between daily functions and those that occur in the digital sphere of individuals in an involuntary inclination

towards narrowing of a potentially dangerous dependency relationship where people and Workers are subject to the dominant position of the platforms Digital.

The problem with new digital technologies and ambitious artificial intelligence programs is that their functions under private guidelines are not really reverting to general benefit. Its social utility is being distorted and all its potential underutilized. Some of the algorithmic functions that are introduced in the centrality of everyday life are not designed to create a more egalitarian and just society, on the contrary, they are serving a greater widening of the global inequality gap and the formation of predatory monopolies of innovation that put in check the autonomy of national economies in a new species of technological neocolonialism. Capitalism is qualitatively transforming itself towards a new way of conceiving production and relations of power and exploitation. It is vital to understand all the effects of this mutation in order to put on the table an alternative capable of facing this new form of technoligarch domination where algorithms and commercial advertising play a fundamental role.

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