



the anti-influence engine

escaping the diabolical machine of pervasive advertising

charlie pinder, university of birmingham

@pindec

“Diabolical machine”

A machine that “produces ... thoughts and feelings by means of ... mysterious forces which the patient’s knowledge ... is inadequate to explain”

Tausk (on schizophrenia)



Diabolical machine of pervasive advertising

1. 'Big data'-driven behavioural targeting
2. Nonconscious advertising
3. 'Native' ads

Infer what makes you tick from what makes you click

Asymmetry in:

- information about what drives your own behaviour
- research, £, technology
- power

Info crosses company & digital divides

Als don't care about the means

What can we do?

Traditional defence = ad literacy

Turn It Off

Suck It Up

Can technology save us?

The Anti-Influence Engine

GATHER

Track the trackers, watch the watchers

RETRAIN

- Incidental retraining across devices
- Aversion, Cognitive Bias Modification
 - SLEEP / SMELL modules

Other solutions?

Research how to give people the tools to protect themselves:

- Anti-spending tech
- Anti-tech tech
- Reveal & use the data that's held on us

Emerging “responsible tech”: TimeWellSpent.io

Ethics

How does the user remain in control of their decisions?

How does the designer remain in control of their creations?

Oppenheimer “Mr President, I feel I have [future] blood on my hands”

Collingridge dilemma

P.S. devalue the crisp association

IF YOU ARE SQUEAMISH, LOOK AWAY!

<image of crisps>

<image of maggots>

“The art of mind control is in the process of becoming a science.

The practitioners of this science know exactly what they are doing and why”

“The victim of mind-manipulation does not know that he is a victim. To him, the walls of his prison are invisible, and he believes himself to be free”.

Discussion

PROBLEM

#surveillancecapitalism. Are dark patterns inevitable?

Are we more than the sum of our (associative/emotional) parts?

ETHICS

What responsibility does the designer of the Engine bear if it's 'misused'?

Do people care they are being manipulated?

What if the system malfunctions/evolves (c.f. HAL)?

SOLUTIONS

How to afford the development of a solution?

What can/should we do? What can I do?

