

The Attention Economy and the Media Industry From Audience Competition to Behavioral Investment

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Abstract:

This paper explores the structural transformations that have reshaped the economics of media in the digital era, highlighting the shift from material production to symbolic and attention-based production. It demonstrates how digital platforms have become the central economic actors that manage human attention and convert it into financial value through algorithms and targeted advertising. The study discusses key related concepts such as the digital economy, platform economy, data economy, and attention economy, emphasizing how these frameworks collectively redefine the relationship between audiences, media, and capital.

Findings indicate that attention has become the scarcest resource in the contemporary media environment, and controlling it constitutes the core of economic and communicative competition. Furthermore, the paper outlines the ethical and professional challenges facing journalism, as well as the broader cultural and social consequences of this paradigm shift. Ultimately, the study concludes that the attention economy represents not only an economic model but also a cultural and epistemic system that has redefined the very function of media from informing to monetizing human behavior and time.

Keywords: Attention Economy, Digital Economy, Digital Media, Knowledge Economy, Platform Economy

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1. INTRODUCTION

The discussion on the economics of media encompasses complex dimensions that go far beyond the traditional view which confines it to the study of financial revenues and operational expenses of media institutions. At its core, the issue does not merely concern the financial or accounting aspects, but extends to analyzing the structural mechanisms that govern the production, distribution, and consumption of media content within a continuously evolving communicative environment.

In this context, the economics of media cannot be separated from the dominant forces in the advertising market its main source of funding—nor from the intricate relationships linking money, media, and knowledge. With the technological transformations witnessed over the past decades, the media process has shifted from a logic of material production to one of symbolic and digital production, where information, data, and attention have become the new resources upon which the contemporary media economy is built.

This transformation has led to the emergence of new economic models that have redefined the relationship between media institutions and their audiences. The user is no longer a passive consumer of content but an integral part of the economic cycle through their data, behavior, and interaction with digital platforms. Consequently, new conceptual frameworks have emerged such as the digital economy, data economy, platform economy, and attention economy which explain how digital platforms have become the central economic actors capable of directing human attention and converting it into monetizable value.

Today, the economics of media are no longer confined to managing financial resources but are increasingly concerned with the management of immaterial resources such as data, time, and attention. These structural transformations call for a rethinking of the functions and roles of media—not merely as a means of communication or entertainment, but as an economic and cultural force shaping social awareness and behavior.

From this perspective arises the central research problem:

How has the attention economy redefined the logic of producing, distributing, and consuming media content?

And what are the structural and professional implications of this transformation for the independence and social role of media institutions in a digital environment governed by platforms and algorithms?

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Social Media Platforms Between the Extension of Traditional Media and the Structural Transformation of the Communication Process:

In the contemporary context, social media platforms can be regarded as a natural continuation of the evolution of traditional media such as the press, radio, and television. While traditional media relied on a one directional model of communication, in which the media institution acted as the sender and the audience as the receiver, social media has introduced a genuine revolution in the structure of communication. Today, every user can act both as a sender and a receiver, functioning as a producer and a consumer of content at the same time.

This transformation extends beyond the technical dimension and reaches the very essence of the communicative process. Within the digital sphere, the media message has been redefined, evolving from a tool for conveying information and meaning into a digital commodity whose value is determined by the number of views, interactions, and clicks. Media content has become governed by the logic of supply and demand, where messages are produced not necessarily for educational or informational purposes but to generate direct economic value through advertising or symbolic value through visibility and influence.

Each post, tweet, or video clip is now assessed by its capacity to capture attention and encourage user engagement. Consequently, media messages have become a central element of the attention economy, which invests in human behavior itself (Rozario, 2013).

2.2 The Shift from the Traditional Economy to the Attention Economy:

The concept of the Attention Economy is among the most prominent ideas that have emerged in recent decades to describe the profound transformation in the logic of both economy and media within the digital environment. This concept indicates that human attention has become the most scarce and valuable resource in an age of massive information flow.

With the abundance of content and the multiplication of platforms, it has become increasingly difficult to capture and maintain user attention, turning attention itself into an economic commodity that companies seek to acquire and invest in.

Over the past few decades, the world has shifted from a traditional economic model based on the material production of goods and services to a new paradigm centered on human attention as a strategic resource. In the traditional economy, value was measured by the quantity of production, natural resources, and physical capital. In contrast, within the digital environment, information, time, and attention have become the main sources of value.

This transformation resulted from the development of the digital economy, which transferred economic activity from factories to digital platforms. Companies no longer rely on selling tangible products but rather on selling digital experiences and measuring user engagement. Thus, material goods have been replaced by symbolic ones, and media content itself has become a commercial product bought and sold according to market logic (Davenport & Beck, 2001). The origin of this concept is attributed to the American economist Herbert Simon (1971), who stated that “a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.” This means that the abundance of information generates a scarcity of attention since humans possess only a limited amount of focus that can be distributed among an overwhelming number of media messages. Consequently, a new economy emerged that no longer relies on the sale of physical goods and services but rather on the buying and selling of human attention through advertising, digital platforms, and interactive applications.

With the rise of the Internet and, more specifically, the expansion of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, the concept acquired a practical dimension. Media institutions no longer sell only news or entertainment products but rather the time users spend on their platforms to advertisers. Every click, like, or share translates into financial value, and every second of user attention is transformed into marketing data exploited in targeted advertising.

In other words, the attention economy is based on investing in human

behavior rather than material production. Digital platforms design their content and algorithms to encourage users to stay engaged for as long as possible, a principle known as retention. In this sense, the user has become an unconscious producer of data, and the time spent on the screen has become an economic currency traded by the world's largest corporations (Davenport & Beck, 2001).

2.3 Platform Economy:

The platform economy represents one of the most prominent manifestations of digital transformation in the global economy. It has fundamentally changed the nature of relationships between producers and consumers and has redefined the concept of economic value within the digital environment. This economy is characterized by the dominance of major digital platforms such as Google, Meta, Amazon, and Apple, which have become the main infrastructure of the contemporary digital economy. These platforms do not simply provide technical services; they control the channels through which economic, social, and cultural activities occur.

Platforms operate according to the principle of digital intermediation. They do not produce content or own goods in the traditional sense but instead control the environment in which economic and social interactions take place. They connect users with advertisers, sellers with buyers, and creators with audiences by relying on algorithms that organize data flows and direct user attention. Through this intermediary role, platforms generate enormous profits without engaging in physical production. Their value lies in their ability to collect, organize, and manage information while controlling attention flows within the digital system (Issues, 2016).

In traditional economies, value was derived from labor or from the production of goods. In the platform economy, value is created through digital interactions. Every click, like, share, or minute spent by a user is transformed into analytical data that allows platforms to develop targeted advertising strategies. As a result, value emerges from the aggregation and redirection of human attention toward content that serves commercial or political purposes. In this sense, platforms do not sell tangible products but rather sell access to audiences. They essentially sell attention as a service.

Platforms maintain control over the digital economy through what is often called platform monopoly. They have the power to set market rules and to manage algorithms that determine visibility, reach, and engagement. This control extends beyond economic influence to include the flow of information and knowledge, giving platforms a dual role that is both economic and communicative. This has led to the emergence of the idea of algorithmic power, which refers to the authority that platforms exercise through code and software instead of legal or political mechanisms.

The platform economy is closely linked to the attention economy because the main source of profit for platforms comes from capturing and retaining user attention within the digital ecosystem. The more users engage, the more data can be monetized, and the greater the financial return. The relationship between the two can be summarized in a simple way: attention generates data, and data generates profit. Digital platforms do not sell a product; they market the human experience itself by transforming digital behavior into an economic resource (Bensoula, 2023).

2.4 Data Economy:

The data economy represents one of the most important stages in the development of the digital economy, as economic value has shifted from material production to the production of data and its use as a strategic resource. In this model, data has become the main source of wealth generation in the digital age, as companies, institutions, and platforms rely on collecting, analyzing, and storing vast amounts of information resulting from users' daily behavior in the electronic space. These data include everything related to personal preferences, social interactions, consumption patterns, geographical locations, and search behavior, making every digital activity a potential source of economic value.

In this context, data has become the driving fuel of the digital economy, to the extent that it has been described as “the new oil” that fuels various contemporary economic sectors, from marketing and advertising to artificial intelligence and digital governance. The value does not come from data itself but from the ability of platforms to analyze it and extract behavioral patterns from it to guide economic and advertising decisions. Every click, search, or online purchase turn into precise information that

helps companies understand the user and anticipate his future needs.

This transformation has made data an independent commodity that is produced, sold, and purchased in specialized digital markets, and major technology companies have come to rely on this trade to achieve huge profits. However, the paradox lies in the fact that the user, unknowingly, has become the main producer of this data, as he generates it for free while interacting with digital platforms. Thus, the user has turned from a consumer into an economic resource whose data is exploited without compensation, which raises ethical and legal questions about digital ownership of data and the user's right to privacy. (The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, 2017)

The spread of the data economy has led to the emergence of a new form of capitalism based on continuous monitoring and analysis, as institutions seek to transform every human experience into material that can be measured and computationally processed. This approach has created a new balance between technology and the economy, as data has become the foundation of decision-making, management, and market control, and even in shaping social and political awareness.

The data economy does not represent merely a technical stage but rather a structural transformation in the nature of value within modern societies, where wealth is no longer measured by the possession of material resources, but by the ability of actors to collect, analyze, and invest data in predicting human behavior. Thus, control over data becomes synonymous with control over the economy itself, making it the new source of power in the twenty-first century. (The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, 2017)

2.5 Algorithms:

The concept of algorithms is one of the key foundations for understanding the deep structure of both the digital economy and the attention economy, as algorithms represent the hidden mind that organizes the flow of data and information and determines what is visible and what remains concealed in the digital space. They are not merely technical computational processes but have become mechanisms of symbolic domination that exert influence over both individual and collective consciousness by controlling the paths of attention and thought.

Algorithms collect and analyze vast amounts of data generated by users during their daily activity on digital platforms, then use this data to rank and personalize content according to each user's interests and past behavior. In this way, platforms reshape the user experience so that individuals see only what reinforces their preferences or arouses their curiosity. This means that algorithms exercise a kind of invisible selection—they decide what deserves attention and what is marginalized or excluded from circulation.

Algorithms have thus become an economic tool par excellence, as they direct the flow of information in ways that serve the interests of targeted advertising and commercial enterprises. The more time users spend within a platform, the greater their potential for economic exploitation. This orientation drives algorithms to maximize engagement and retention, even at the expense of the quality or accuracy of content, which explains the widespread dissemination of sensational and misleading news.

The influence of algorithms extends beyond the economy to the reconfiguration of collective perception. They determine the reference framework through which individuals think and create “knowledge bubbles” that trap users within closed intellectual circles, exposing them only to content that confirms their prior beliefs. In this way, algorithms become cultural and political actors that shape public consciousness without direct intervention from traditional authority or institutional censorship (Media Technologies, n.d.).

Understanding algorithms today is no longer a purely technical issue but an academic and ethical necessity, for they constitute the central mechanism of control in the digital age. They do not merely organize data but reshape meaning itself, transforming the digital economy into a space where minds are managed before markets. Consequently, human consciousness becomes part of the productive cycle, its value measured not by freedom or critical thought but by its capacity for engagement and attraction.

3. Consequences Arising from the Transition to the Attention Economy

3.1 On Media and Professional Practice:

The shift toward the attention economy has produced a fundamental change in the philosophy of media practice. The journalist is no longer

merely a transmitter of news or a seeker of facts, but has become an active agent within a system governed by the logic of attraction and instantaneous interaction. In this context, the priority has moved from producing reliable and balanced content to producing fast and engaging content capable of capturing the audience's attention within limited moments. Traditional professional standards, such as credibility, source verification, and analytical depth, have gradually receded under the pressure of the digital market, which measures success by the number of views and interactions rather than by the quality of content.

This transformation has directed journalistic practice toward sensational and emotional topics capable of generating a digital buzz, instead of focusing on issues of cognitive value or the public interest. The algorithms that control dissemination mechanisms within digital platforms reward attention grabbing content and marginalize serious or balanced content, placing journalists and institutions in a constant race against time to keep pace with the rapid tempo of algorithms. This reality has created increasing temporal challenges, as the speed of publication and immediate interaction with events have become essential conditions for remaining within the digital field of vision, thereby reducing opportunities for field verification or careful vetting of sources before publishing.

This accelerated media environment has also contributed to the erosion of boundaries between news, analysis, and opinion, with attention focusing on form, headline, and image more than substance. Within this dynamic, the function of the journalist has been redefined to align with the logic of the attention economy, such that what is expected is no longer the production of precise knowledge, but the achievement of immediate mass engagement. Consequently, concerns are mounting about declining trust between the public and media institutions, as the spread of inaccurate information and superficial content distorts the media's essential function as a watchdog and epistemic authority.

The attention economy has imposed on media practice a new equation that combines speed and accuracy, profit and credibility, an equation of great difficulty amid fierce digital competition and the transformation of the

audience into an active party in the production and circulation of information. Thus, today's foremost professional challenge is to find a balance between attracting attention and preserving the credibility of media discourse, in a way that ensures the continuity of journalism as a space for knowledge rather than merely an industry of entertainment or sensationalism. (Steinhorst, n.d.)

3.2 On Society:

The dynamics of the attention economy have been reflected in contemporary society at multiple levels, as social relationships are no longer built on direct communication and genuine human interaction, but are managed through digital media whose nature is defined by algorithms and governed by metrics of engagement and reach. Deep rooted social bonds have been replaced by virtual relationships based on digital presence rather than real existence, so that the values of friendship and belonging have become linked to the number of followers and likes rather than to human depth or actual support. This reality has produced a new form of social isolation amid abundant connectivity, as individuals live in closed digital circles resembling communicative bubbles that do not allow for the exchange of authentic experiences or constructive critical dialogue.

In addition, the predominance of entertaining and sensational content has led to a decline in critical sensibility and the ability to distinguish between information and meaning. The contemporary user consumes vast amounts of content daily, but does so quickly and without scrutiny, producing what can be called fragmented awareness or instant knowledge, a superficial cognition that does not generate a stable intellectual or social stance. This pattern of rapid information consumption has made audiences more susceptible to emotional influence and less capable of logical analysis, which is reflected in political and social attitudes and weakens society's immunity to misinformation and media manipulation.

Digital platforms have also contributed to entrenching a culture of comparison and ostentatious consumption, where an individual's value is measured by the extent of virtual presence rather than by a real position in society. This situation has created a psychological environment charged with tension and anxiety, fueled by the constant pursuit of virtual social approval and the desire for continuous visibility. Every interaction, comment, or like

has become a form of symbolic self-evaluation, leading to an aggravation of psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy, especially among younger groups raised under the dominance of platforms.

The society of the attention economy lives a striking paradox, it is more connected than ever before, yet at the same time more fragmented and isolated. While technology promises closeness and interaction, the logic of the digital market turns communication itself into a commodity managed according to economic calculations. Thus, the social sphere is transformed into a market of attention and emotions, where authentic human values are replaced by the metrics of instant engagement, and collective awareness recedes before the dominance of image, speed, and spectacle. (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021)

3.3 On Culture and Human Values:

The impact of the attention economy has not been limited to media or social aspects, rather, it has extended into the depths of the cultural and moral structure of modern societies, producing a qualitative shift in modes of symbolic and cognitive production. This economic model has generated a superficial and fast paced culture built on the principle of attraction and spectacle rather than understanding and contemplation, wherein the image is preferred over the word, the scene over the idea, and emotion over reason. Contemporary culture has become governed by the logic of virality and trending, losing part of its enlightening dimension and entering a cycle of instant cultural consumption aimed at momentary gratification rather than meaning making.

One of the most prominent outcomes of this transformation is the commodification of culture and knowledge. Cultural value is no longer measured by originality or intellectual depth, but by the extent of content dissemination and the number of views it achieves. The creator and the intellectual have been transformed into a content producer, and the recipient into a digital consumer, with both subject to the algorithmic market logic that determines what is displayed and what is marginalized. Thus, the logic of profit has overshadowed the logic of meaning, and the educational and

cognitive function of the media, once dedicated to enlightenment, has been replaced by a consumerist entertainment function that seeks to capture attention and generate engagement.

The spread of digital platforms has also created a global cultural homogenization based on rapid visual symbols and short form entertainment content, which has weakened local cultural particularities and led to the erosion of national identity in the face of dominant global models. Culture is no longer produced within the boundaries of society, but is imported and recycled according to the logic of the global platform that determines tastes and trends. This unequal flow of symbols and images has made societies live in a state of cultural duality between what is locally rooted and what is globally hegemonic, generating value tensions among generations and social groups.

In the age of the attention economy, the cultural challenge lies in preserving meaning in the face of speed, depth in the face of visual dominance, and authenticity in the face of consumerist incursions. The issue is no longer merely about transformations in media production means, but about transformations in the system of values and aesthetic and cognitive standards that govern humanity's relationship with knowledge, beauty, and truth. Restoring the balance between culture as a human value and culture as a commercial product has become an urgent necessity to ensure the continued civilizational role of media and culture in building awareness rather than marketing it. (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021)

3.4 On the Digital Identity of the Individual:

The rise of the attention economy has brought about fundamental transformations in the concept of individual identity, such that the human being no longer lives solely within the boundaries of the real self, but has become divided between real existence and virtual existence shaped by digital platforms. The virtual sphere has shifted from a space for free expression and cognitive interaction to a space of competition for visibility and social recognition, where the symbolic value of the individual is measured by the number of followers and the level of engagement achieved more than by positions or actual accomplishments. Thus, the virtual self has emerged as a substitute for the real self, becoming a beautified representation

presented to the external world in a constant race for acceptance and dissemination.

This reality has contributed to the creation of new performative behaviors based on constructing image before meaning and visual persuasion before critical thought. The individual on a digital platform is not only a recipient of content but has also become a producer of it within an economic logic that links visibility to interaction. Over time, these practices have formed a kind of artificial identity nourished by others' expectations and reformulated according to the rules of the digital market. Thus, the self has become governed by algorithms that determine its reach and the public's interaction with it, transforming it into a digitally measurable entity in an environment dominated by numbers and indicators rather than values and meanings.

Platform policies have also led to the erosion of individual privacy, as personal data are exploited to construct a precise digital image of each user. This image is not limited to what the person presents about themselves, but is inferred from fine grained behaviors, what they watch, what they like, and how long they remain in each interaction. These data are later used to target advertising or influence consumer and political attitudes and behaviors, placing the individual in a space of constant surveillance.

The contemporary human has become an interactive being living within a closed loop of monitoring and evaluation, where existence is measured by instant engagement indicators and judged in the language of numbers. This situation has produced a deep psychological dependency on platform notifications, as the individual links the sense of self-worth to the number of likes and responses, gradually leading to addiction to digital interaction. This addiction is not limited to behavior, rather, it extends to the psychological and social structure of the individual, transforming the human need for communication into a desire for continuous digital recognition. (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021)

3.6 On the Economic Structure of the Media:

The attention economy has brought about a radical transformation in the economic structure of media institutions, redefining revenue sources,

financing patterns, and power relations within the global communicative sphere. After traditional media institutions relied on print advertising or subscriptions as primary sources of funding, new models have emerged based on targeted advertising, platform-based marketing, and the sale of users' personal data. This shift has turned technology giants such as Meta, Google, and TikTok into dominant financial centers capable of controlling advertising flows worldwide, making digital platforms themselves the principal economic actors in the media industry.

This reality has changed the logic of the media market in its entirety, as the economic value of an institution is no longer measured by the number of readers or the quality of content, but by its ability to capture attention and convert it into marketable data. In this sense, information has become a raw material for commercial investment, and the audience itself an economic resource from which profits are extracted through interactive activities. This new equation has transformed the media from a realm of enlightenment and public service into an integrated capitalist industry built on investing users' digital time and behavior.

These transformations have led to a redistribution of economic and advertising power, as the position of local media institutions and print newspapers has declined in the face of the dominance of digital platforms that monopolize data and control mechanisms of dissemination and funding. Advertising, which once represented the backbone of the press economy, has increasingly shifted toward platforms that provide advertisers with precise data on user interests, pushing traditional media institutions into an unprecedented financial crisis.

Small and medium sized institutions have found themselves bound to the logic of major platforms in order to reach audiences, leading to a decline in their editorial independence and their transformation into mere content providers operating according to platform algorithms. This dependency has created a new form of digital economic colonialism; wherein transnational corporations control the flows of information and advertising within the global media space.

What we are witnessing today is a gradual transition from a media economy based on the free production of information to a centralized digital

economy dominated by a limited number of companies that own the infrastructure, data, and algorithms. As a result, the media has become a field that reflects the imbalance between capital and knowledge, with platforms dictating market conditions and success metrics according to their commercial interests, thereby threatening media independence and its social function.

The attention economy has altered the very concept of media, instead of being a tool for enlightening the public, it has become a tool for exploiting it, instead of aiming to convey truth, it seeks to attract engagement. Thus, it can be said that the economic transformations engendered by this new system have not only modified methods of media financing but have also reformulated the institutional identity of the journalistic profession in an era governed by algorithms, in which value is measured by the extent of attention rather than by the depth of information. (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021)

4.Challenges of Media Practice in the Context of the Attention Economy

The shift toward the attention economy has generated profound challenges that have affected the very core of media practice on professional, organizational, and ethical levels. As the media system transitioned from the logic of “information transmission” to that of “attention attraction,” the priorities of journalists and institutions changed, with speed and visibility replacing accuracy and credibility as the primary measures of performance.

The first challenge lies in the decline of traditional professional values that once formed the foundation of journalism, such as source verification, objectivity, and critical distance. The modern journalist now faces a constant race against time to keep up with the rapid pace of digital platforms, where emotional and sensational content is rewarded at the expense of serious investigations and in-depth analysis. This professional pressure has made content quality dependent on the digital market logic that measures success by clicks and views.

A second challenge arises from the dominance of algorithms in determining media agendas. Digital platforms have ceased to be mere tools of dissemination and have instead become editorial actors that decide what is visible to the public and what remains hidden, based on artificial intelligence

models driven by engagement and profit. This reality has created a form of “editorial dependency” on major platforms, where priority is given to content that spreads quickly rather than to meaningful or socially valuable content. As a result, editorial policies are increasingly dictated by platform logic rather than professional journalistic standards.

A third challenge relates to the pressures of media time. The attention economy thrives on the rapid and continuous flow of information, forcing journalists to work in environments that leave little room for reflection or verification. News has become an ephemeral product that loses value immediately after publication, weakening the analytical and interpretive functions of journalistic discourse. Speed of interaction has become an absolute priority, even at the cost of accuracy or depth.

The fourth challenge concerns the duality between professionalism and commercialism. Media institutions must now balance their educational and informative mission with the demands of the digital market. This balance is difficult to achieve, as the new economic model relies on monetizing attention rather than educating audiences. Consequently, journalists often find themselves torn between ethical commitment and digital success, which drives some toward emotionally charged or sensational content to ensure the institution’s financial survival.

In addition, journalists face challenges related to emerging technologies and artificial intelligence, as machines increasingly participate in producing, writing, and ranking news. This raises questions about the future of the human role in journalism. The more algorithms become capable of predicting audience behavior and tailoring content to their preferences, the smaller the space for human initiative in editorial decision-making becomes.

Finally, there is the ethical challenge of turning the audience into an economic resource. User data are exploited to guide content and generate profits without their awareness or consent, raising fundamental questions about transparency, privacy, and the manipulation of collective emotions.

Altogether, these challenges place media practice today between the hammer of the market and the anvil of values—between the necessity of survival in a competitive digital environment and the obligation to preserve the enlightening mission of journalism. Developing critical awareness of

these challenges is thus an essential condition for redefining media ethics in a way that accommodates digital transformations while maintaining the integrity and humanistic essence of the profession.

5. Conclusion

The attention economy represents one of the most pivotal transformations in the history of communication and media. Media concern is no longer focused solely on producing information but on directing and monetizing human attention. The audience has shifted from being a passive receiver to becoming an economic resource whose value is extracted from data, behavior, and interaction, while digital platforms have become the arena where this process takes place through precise algorithms controlling visibility, choice, and engagement.

These transformations reveal that media value is no longer measured by the quality or credibility of content but by its ability to attract attention and stimulate interaction. This has led to the commodification of information and the integration of media into the global digital market logic. As a result, media institutions have evolved from being channels for meaning transmission to symbolic production entities that manage human time and behavior as sources of profit. While this new model has opened vast opportunities for creativity and innovation, it has simultaneously introduced profound professional and ethical challenges that affect the social mission of media.

The relentless pursuit of engagement has weakened verification and accuracy, blurred the line between knowledge and entertainment, and contributed to new forms of digital alienation, cultural superficiality, and the erosion of personal privacy. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive critical vision that restores balance between profitability and responsibility, technology and humanity, algorithms and values. The goal is not to reject digital transformation but to direct it toward a more conscious and humane media practice—one that restores information as a form of knowledge rather than a transient commodity, and that places the human being at the center of communication instead of reducing them to an object of surveillance and commodification.

Therefore, the future of media in the attention economy depends on its ability to harmonize the economic and ethical dimensions, and to innovate professional models that preserve credibility and freedom in an era where algorithms govern collective consciousness and turn human time into symbolic capital.

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