Paying for attention: narratives of control and the cultural economics of attention, 1990-present

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Abstract
Since the invention of the World Wide Web in 1990 and the commercialization of the internet, numerous scholars and cultural critics have interrogated the cultural and economic role of attention, as both a psychobiological ability and a psychosocial good. In particular, commentators from many disciplines posit contested theories of an attention economy, a socioeconomic regime in which, since information and communications technologies make information abundant, the attention needed to acquire information becomes the world's most scarce economic resource. This dissertation argues that a parallel body of postmodernist narratives has emerged from the same conditions, in which technologies of attention enmesh individuals in illegible systems of production, consumption, surveillance, and thought management. Intensified strategies for focusing individual and collective attention are essential components of these narratives, and thus attention, as a means and an end, plays a central role in dramatic tensions between power and resistance.

At a time of increased concern for what happens to the long narrative in the age of the text and tweet, my analyses of the film The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998), novels Glamorama (Bret Easton Ellis, 1998) and Dead Stars (Bruce Wagner, 2012), and graphic novel series Transmetropolitan (Warren Ellis and Darick Robertson, 1998-2003), explore both continuities and disjunctions in how different media represent this narrative, since diverse institutional codes dictate conditions of production and reception. Despite the different physiological, technological, temporal, and spatial demands these texts place upon their readers' attention, in the main they share an emblematic suspicion of attention's relationship to the governing institutions of American life, which ask subjects to attend to their bodies, minds, schedules and life objectives according to a digitized ideology of perpetual labor, consumerism, and efficiency. This dissertation also intervenes in debates about the value of close textual analysis, arguing that paying attention to narrative forms and themes forces readers to pay attention to the act of paying attention, increasingly important at a time when large institutions find new ways to monetize attention as a form of unpaid labor.

Keywords
Attention, Attention Economy, Dead Stars, Glamorama, The Truman Show,
The notion of attention penetrated the realm of economics and organizational sciences through various authors who can be characterized by a strong interest in multidisciplinary approaches and in particular, psychology, organization science as well as epistemology and philosophy of science.

3.1. Herbert Simon. In the attention economy, attention is not only a resource but a currency: users pay for a service with their attention. Today, the dynamics of the attention economy incentivize companies to draw users in to spend more and more time on apps and sites. Similarly, the attention of a smartphone user is often divided between the app or website currently used and a TV show or another external stimulus. That is why sessions tend to be shorter on mobile than on the desktop: the chance of an interruption is high. Some users feel helpless when it comes to controlling the amount of time that they spend on their devices. Digital products are designed to be more and more engaging, often keeping users hooked. The new attention economy, therefore, will anoint a new set of moguls in the business world—not the CEOs or fund managers of yesteryear, but new masters of attention with a grounding in the humanities and liberal arts. Lanham’s The Electronic Word was one of the earliest and most influential books on new electronic culture. The Economics of Attention builds on the best insights ofthat seminal book to map the new frontier that information technologies have created.

The Economics of Attention Today: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead. 5. Conclusion. Haut de page. He used a procedure called dichotic listening in which he presented different messages to each ear through headphones. This experiment showed that when subjects are told to listen to two streams of words in different ears, they selectively attend to one stream. The notion of attention is a resource in the economic system and in the organizational sciences. Through various authors, it is characterized by a strong interest in multidisciplinary approaches and in particular, psychology, organization science, as well as epistemology and philosophy of science.

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...more. Get A Copy. Amazon. Skip it all except for the chapter on Barbie Doll and the Cultural Conversation. I fully agree with the guy! Since the invention of the World Wide Web in 1990 and the commercialization of the internet, numerous scholars and cultural critics have interrogated the cultural and economic role of attention, as both a psychobiological ability and a psychosocial good. In particular, commentators from many disciplines posit contested theories of an attention economy, a socioeconomic regime in which, since information and communications technologies make information abundant, the attention needed to acquire information becomes the world’s most scarce economic resource.