CONSUMER AUTONOMY AND ALGORITHMIC CONTROL: NETFLIX AS A DIGITAL BROADCASTING ALTERNATIVE IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

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Abstract

This study explores the tension between consumer freedom and control. algorithmic use of the Netflix streaming platform. The research employs a literature review methodology, using sources from Google Scholar to investigate the impact of recommendation algorithms on user autonomy and content consumption patterns. Specifically, it focuses on Netflix's collaborative filtering algorithms, binge-watching phenomena, and the tension between consumer freedom and platform-driven content selection. Findings reveal that while Netflix promotes personalized recommendations, these algorithms often lead to repetitive consumption patterns and reinforce specific cultural perspectives. Furthermore, the platform's business model, emphasizing user retention and engagement through continuous consumption, fosters behavioral dependencies like binge-watching. The study highlights that although Netflix offers mechanisms for content personalization, such as "Play Something Else," these tools subtly shift control to the algorithm, reducing consumer autonomy. Conclusions suggest that Netflix's use of algorithmic control reflects broader trends in digital media consumption, where the promise of user freedom is moderated by the platform's operational logic, prioritizing engagement and profit. These findings underscore the need for critical awareness of how algorithmic systems influence consumption and the balance between consumer freedom and algorithmic governance in streaming services.

Keywords: *Algorithmic Control, Consumer Autonomy, Binge-Watching Behavior, Collaborative Filtering, Digital Cultural Consumption.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Most contemporary digital applications and websites rely heavily on artificial intelligence (AI) to personalize user experiences. Popular platforms such as TikTok, Netflix, Instagram, Amazon, and Spotify employ AI-driven algorithms to analyze user behavior, content preferences, and consumption patterns in order to deliver highly tailored recommendations (Bjorlo, 2024). This personalization is designed not only to enhance user convenience but also to increase the duration and intensity of user engagement.

The use of AI in recommendation systems extends beyond a purely technical function and has become a central strategy within the attention economy. By processing vast amounts of data, algorithms are able to predict user interests with increasing accuracy and present content that is likely to elicit emotional or cognitive responses. As a result, AI plays a critical role in shaping digital experiences that are individualized in appearance yet standardized through algorithmic logic.

Meta, as one of the world's largest technology companies, similarly relies on AI to improve its recommendation systems and advertising effectiveness across its platforms. This reliance has generated substantial financial returns, as evidenced by a 22% increase in advertising revenue in the second quarter of 2024 (Vanian, 2024). Such growth underscores the extent to which AI-driven personalization directly supports advertising-based business models.

The scale of Meta's influence becomes even more apparent when considering its user base. In 2022, Meta reported approximately 3.74 billion active users across all its platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Dixon, 2024). With such a vast global audience, Meta's algorithms possess significant power to shape information flows, consumption preferences, and patterns of social interaction on a global scale. This expansion illustrates how algorithms increasingly dominate user experiences by determining what content is seen, prioritized, and consumed. Rather than being neutral, algorithmic curation actively structures users' digital environments, often reinforcing engagement-maximizing content. Consequently, users may become confined within "filter bubbles" that limit exposure to diverse viewpoints and information.

However, the widespread use of AI in personalization has also raised serious ethical concerns, particularly regarding the manipulation of consumer behavior. The UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA, 2022) has warned that digital algorithms can subtly influence users' decisions, reducing their ability to act autonomously by steering choices through repetitive and strategically designed recommendations. Moreover, algorithms not only enhance user experiences but also intensively extract user attention and personal data for commercial gain. This dynamic is reflected in persistently high digital advertising prices, even amid economic slowdowns in certain markets. Such conditions highlight how the primary value of digital platforms lies in their capacity to capture and monetize sustained user attention.

As a result, users are increasingly positioned as passive recipients of content and recommendations determined by AI-defined parameters. Opportunities for independent decision-making and personal autonomy may be constrained, as available choices are pre-filtered and shaped by opaque algorithmic systems that operate largely beyond users' awareness or control. On the other hand, Meta's decision to restructure its advertising technology architecture following Apple's iOS privacy updates in 2021 demonstrates the critical importance of algorithmic control for business sustainability. This strategic shift indicates that algorithms function not only to optimize user experience but also as a foundational mechanism for maintaining long-term profitability, even in the face of regulatory pressure and evolving global privacy standards.

Thus, the study of individual autonomy versus algorithmic control finds clear relevance in the context of platforms and AI. While AI provides better personalized experiences, users are trapped in an ecosystem that exploits their data and engagement for commercial gain. The critical question that arises is: to what extent do individuals truly have free will when their recommendations and interactions are dictated by algorithms? To answer this question, this study uses the case study of Netflix, a video-on-demand platform. (VOD), namely a streaming service that provides content on user demand via the internet network.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Liberal-Individual Perspective

liberal-individual concept is one of the normative frameworks in media and political studies (Loecherbach et al., 2020). This perspective focuses on the autonomy of individuals in determining their choices and preferences without interference or restrictions from external institutions, such as the state or traditional media. The liberal-individual perspective assumes that each individual is an autonomous agent with the ability to make the best decisions for themselves. In the context of digital media, this means that users have full control over their information consumption and are free to choose the content they want to access without regulatory or curation restrictions. Consumer satisfaction is the main measure of the success of this system: the more satisfied individuals are with their choices, the better the ecosystem is in supporting personal freedom.

The liberal-individual perspective has the risk of fragmentation, which is when each individual only selects information that suits their interests, this can strengthen the filter bubble or confirmation bias, where users are only exposed to perspectives that support their views. The filter bubble and echo chamber phenomena illustrate the limitations of access to information in the digital era, which is influenced by personalization algorithms and social interaction patterns. These two concepts often play a role in strengthening bias and minimizing exposure to alternative perspectives, thus giving rise to the risk of polarization and even radicalization.

2. Bubble Filter and Echo Chamber

Filter bubbles occur when platform algorithms such as social media or search engines personalize content based on a user's history, preferences, and behavior. These algorithms focus on presenting information that aligns with a user's interests, isolating them from content that is inconsistent with their personal views. According to Wolfowicz et al. (2023), filter bubbles can be a significant factor in the radicalization process because users are only exposed to information that reinforces extreme beliefs without any counter-views. Meanwhile, research by Grossetti et al. (2021) shows that on platforms like Twitter, engagement-based recommendations actually further limit the diversity of information, strengthen filter bubbles, and facilitate polarization.

On the other hand, echo chamber describes a social phenomenon where individuals actively choose to interact only with people or communities who share similar views. In such an environment, the same opinions are constantly repeated and reinforced, strengthening users' beliefs and blocking access to alternative perspectives. Cho and Kim's (2022) research highlights that echo chambers not only exacerbate filter bubbles but also contribute to social fragmentation, as interactions only occur within groups with similar opinions. Avnur (2020) adds that this phenomenon makes people more susceptible to "motivated reasoning", where they tend to accept information that supports personal beliefs and reject facts that contradict them.

Filter bubbles and echo chambers often operate together, creating a synergistic effect that narrows the user's information space. Filter bubbles work at the algorithmic level by filtering the content that appears in feeds or search results, while echo chambers operate at the social level, where users intentionally limit their interactions to like-minded groups. Bruns (2021) emphasizes that while these two concepts have different mechanisms, the end result is similar: limited access to information and increased polarization. As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to discover new perspectives or change their views, increasing the risk of extremism. Chen (2022) warns that the combination of the two creates a closed information loop that is difficult to penetrate.

However, several studies also offer solutions to break the filter bubble and echo chamber effects. McKay et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of designing digital platforms to encourage users to explore information beyond their usual preferences. Meanwhile, Talamanca and Arfini (2022) suggest a new approach to understanding information dynamics, so that people are more open to different perspectives.

3. Commodification of Personal Data

In today's digital ecosystem, user data is processed through a process called data rentiership, a strategy for companies to make a profit by renting or selling access to data to third parties. Birch et al. (2020) explain that this data capitalism has formed a new business paradigm in which personal information is privatized and traded as a commercial asset. This model gives companies the ability to exploit data without significant control from users, leading to policy changes and increased ethical concerns about privacy and data control.

In addition, Hummel et al. (2021) highlight the dilemma of data ownership. Ideally, users have rights over their data, but in practice, technology companies often take full control. This weakens the capacity of individuals and societies to regulate data use and make informed decisions about their information. As a result, the information gap between companies and society widens.

This commodification phenomenon also forms the basis for surveillance capitalism, where companies use data to predict and manipulate consumer behavior. Aaltonen et al. (2021) explain that data analytics has become a central component of the advertising industry, with companies creating highly personalized and targeted marketing messages. This practice has not only changed consumer behavior but also increased reliance on data as a primary commercial tool. Harkin et al. (2020) add that the spyware industry also exploits this gap by secretly collecting information and monetizing it, often without the user's knowledge.

Data commodification has also penetrated the education sector. Lai et al. (2024) describe how digital learning platforms exploit student data under the guise of improving the learning experience. Although these applications appear to be designed for functional purposes, student data is often used for commercial purposes, such as selling products or targeting ads. Such practices show that data commodification has infiltrated various sectors of life, blurring the lines between educational interests and business motives.

Over time, the normalization of personal data collection has begun to occur. Mertzani and Pitt (2022) note that many individuals accept this practice as an inevitable part of modern life. However, behind this normalization lies the risk of exploitation that harms user privacy. The more control companies have over personal data, the harder it is for users to protect themselves from invasive surveillance practices.

In an increasingly data-dependent digital world, the commodification of personal information poses major challenges for ethics, transparency, and regulation. Birch et al. (2021) emphasize that Big Tech’s business models are heavily dependent on their ability to collect and value data as an asset. The more data they collect, the higher its commercial value to the company, and the stronger their dominance in the digital economy.

4. The Dilemma between Consumer Freedom and Algorithmic Control

The dilemma of consumer freedom and algorithmic control illustrates the paradox that occurs in the digital era, where the freedom to choose independently seems to be promised, but in reality is often limited by algorithms working behind the scenes. Algorithms used by digital companies not only aim to provide relevant recommendations, but also direct and modulate consumer decisions for commercial gain. Although personalization is considered to make things easier, consumer choices are increasingly limited by decision architectures controlled by algorithmic systems.

In some cases, algorithms offer real benefits to consumers. Fan and Liu (2022) show that algorithmic autonomy in purchasing decisions can increase efficiency and convenience. For example, e-commerce algorithms that recommend products based on individual preferences allow consumers to find the items they need without having to search manually. At this level, freedom of choice looks like convenience and efficiency, where consumers feel as if they have control over their choices.

However, the control applied by algorithms is not always transparent and often aims to manipulate consumer behavior. Galli (2022) reveals that marketing algorithms are designed to exploit consumers’ psychological weaknesses, leading them to make decisions that benefit the company. For example, online platforms can change the order of recommendations or limit visible options to make consumers more likely to buy certain products. Such practices raise ethical dilemmas because consumers’ freedom is being unknowingly violated, and their choices are actually limited by the intentionally manipulated design of the system.

In this digital environment, consumers are often faced with the illusion of freedom. Dholakia et al. (2021) emphasize that modern consumers are not always aware that their choices have been influenced by algorithms. They liken this situation to a form of "false freedom," where consumers believe they have control, but in reality, the choice architecture built by companies has reduced the alternatives they can choose from. Choices that seem spontaneous and personal are often the result of algorithmic modulation designed to direct consumers to certain decisions.

Algorithmic control also raises privacy concerns, as consumers' personal data is monitored and analyzed to predict their behavior. Laniuk (2020) notes that society is currently in a state of "algorithmic control," where companies and institutions collect information about individuals to indirectly control their actions. In this context, consumer freedom is increasingly difficult to achieve because their decisions are always influenced by the data collected and analyzed by these systems.

To protect consumer rights, regulatory and transparency measures are needed. de Marcellis-Warin et al. (2022) suggest empowering consumers through algorithmic tools that can detect bias and manipulation. In addition, companies need to implement self-regulation to ensure that the algorithms they use do not harm consumers. This effort needs to be accompanied by greater openness about how algorithms work, so that consumers have a deep understanding and are able to make truly free decisions.

C. METHOD

This research is a literature review study. The researcher used Google Scholar as a search engine. Google Scholar was chosen because it indexes a wide variety of sources so that it can retrieve results from a larger universe of possibilities than other specific publisher recommendation engines (Krzton, 2023). The search was conducted with the keywords "consumer freedom" + "netflix" and "algorithmic control" + "netflix" for publication period from 2020-2024. The search results show 14 articles containing the keywords "consumer freedom" + "netflix" and 308 articles containing the keywords "algorithmic control" + "netflix". Since Google Scholar sorts the results according to relevance based on full text, source, author, and number of citations (Tuusjarvi et al., 2024), it makes sense to only use the references generated at the forefront, namely the first page consisting of 10 articles. The results obtained 20 articles that will be used for review and to obtain research results.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The development of digital streaming platforms, particularly Netflix, represents not only technological advancement in media distribution but also a profound transformation in consumption patterns, freedom of choice, and power relations between users and algorithmic systems. As Netflix has evolved into a data-driven and algorithm-based platform, recommendation algorithms have assumed a central role in shaping user preferences, viewing behaviors, and consumption decisions. Consequently, the study of Netflix cannot be separated from broader discussions on algorithmic governance, consumer culture, psychological decision-making, and the political economy of digital media.

This literature review aims to systematically map recent scholarly findings related to Netflix's algorithmic infrastructure, encompassing technical aspects of recommendation systems, data-driven business strategies, and their broader social, cultural, and psychological implications. Previous studies suggest that algorithms function not merely as efficiency-enhancing tools but also as mechanisms that structure consumption patterns, limit perceived alternatives, and renegotiate the meaning of freedom and consumer autonomy within digital environments.

Table 1 presents a structured summary of the reviewed literature, outlining each study's research focus, key findings, and relevance to the present research. This overview serves to position the current study within existing academic debates, identify research gaps, and clarify its contribution to understanding the interplay between algorithms, digital consumerism, and user autonomy in contemporary streaming platforms.

Table 1 Literature Review Result

No.	Author(s) & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Relevance to the Study
1	Elliott (2024)	History and development of Netflix	Netflix evolved from a DVD rental service into an algorithm-driven streaming platform, utilizing user data such as completion rates and viewing gaps	Provides background on Netflix's technological evolution
2	Daniels (2024)	Collaborative filtering algorithms	Netflix's recommendation system is based on collaborative filtering, using similarities among users rather than individual viewing history alone	Explains the technical foundation of Netflix's recommendation system
3	Pisani (2024)	Recommendation system comparison	Collaborative filtering is more complex and effective than content-based filtering	Supports the superiority of Netflix's algorithmic approach
4	Banghao (2024)	Needs versus wants in consumption	Subscribing to Netflix reflects ambiguous boundaries between real needs and pseudo-needs	Relevant for analyzing digital consumerism
5	Thumfart (2024)	Liberalism and consumer freedom	The concept of "freedom from want" promotes consumer freedom but contributes to excessive consumption	Provides ideological context for consumer behavior
6	Ivkovic (2024)	Competition among streaming platforms	Exclusive content competition limits consumer choice and creates fear of missing out (FOMO)	Explains structural pressure shaping user decisions
7	Vroom (1964)	Expectancy theory	Choices become more attractive when expectations and alternatives are limited	Supports psychological analysis of consumer choice
8	Westren-Doll (2024)	Machine learning and business strategy	Netflix's algorithms enable optimal pricing strategies and effective media planning	Links algorithms to corporate profit strategies

9	Molesworth et al. (2024)	Consumer autonomy	It is difficult to distinguish whether viewing choices are user-driven or algorithmically influenced	Central to debates on user freedom
10	Hroch et al. (2024)	Algorithms and culture	Algorithms actively shape cultural consumption patterns	Supports the concept of algorithmic culture
11	Siles et al. (2023)	Algorithmic culture dynamics	Algorithms are continuously reshaped through everyday practices	Highlights the non-static nature of algorithms
12	Juego et al. (2024)	Algorithms and labor management	Netflix uses algorithms to evaluate employee performance	Expands algorithmic influence beyond consumers
13	Zundel (2024)	Binge-watching behavior	Streaming platforms normalize binge-watching as a dominant consumption pattern	Relevant to excessive media consumption analysis
14	Bastos et al. (2024)	Psychological effects of binge-watching	Uncontrolled binge-watching can lead to fatigue and mental health issues	Demonstrates social consequences of algorithmic control
15	Kosciesza (2024)	Human labor in algorithms	Human "taggers" are mechanized to support Netflix's recommendation system	Shows human–machine interaction in digital platforms
16	O'Reilly et al. (2024)	Algorithmic matching systems	Algorithms match users with content providers based on preferences and reliability	Explains efficiency of digital recommendation systems
17	Elliott (2024)	Cultural freedom and limitation	Netflix creates new forms of cultural consumption while simultaneously restricting user autonomy	Provides critical sociological perspective
18	Siles et al. (2023)	User resistance to algorithms	Users can manipulate algorithms through account sharing, VPN use, and shared devices	Demonstrates user agency within algorithmic systems

Perkembangan Netflix dari layanan penyewaan DVD menjadi platform streaming berbasis algoritma menandai pergeseran besar dalam pola konsumsi media digital. Sejak memperkenalkan layanan video on demand pada tahun 2007, Netflix memanfaatkan kemajuan teknologi internet dan machine learning untuk membangun sistem rekomendasi yang semakin kompleks (Elliott, 2024). Sistem ini terutama menggunakan metode *collaborative filtering*, yaitu merekomendasikan konten berdasarkan kesamaan preferensi antar kelompok pengguna, bukan semata-mata berdasarkan riwayat tontonan individu (Daniels, 2024; Pisani, 2024). Pendekatan ini memungkinkan Netflix memetakan perilaku menonton pengguna ke dalam ribuan klaster selera, sehingga rekomendasi yang dihasilkan menjadi lebih presisi dan efektif dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan pengguna.

Namun, efektivitas algoritma tersebut juga memunculkan persoalan terkait kebebasan konsumen dan batas antara kebutuhan dan keinginan. Banghao (2024) menyoroti bahwa keinginan untuk berlangganan Netflix sering kali merupakan bentuk kebutuhan semu (*pseudo needs*) yang sulit dibedakan dari kebutuhan nyata. Hal ini sejalan dengan kritik terhadap konsep *freedom from want* dalam liberalisme pasca Perang Dunia II, yang menjanjikan kebebasan konsumsi tetapi dalam praktiknya justru mendorong konsumerisme berlebihan (Thumfart, 2024). Dalam konteks ini, platform seperti Netflix tidak memiliki insentif moral maupun ekonomi untuk membatasi konsumsi berdasarkan kebutuhan, karena logika bisnis yang dominan berorientasi pada keuntungan dan retensi pengguna.

Persaingan antar platform streaming turut memperkuat dinamika tersebut. Ivkovic (2024) menjelaskan bahwa eksklusivitas konten menyebabkan konsumen dihadapkan pada pilihan yang terbatas, sehingga memunculkan *fear of missing out* (FOMO). Kondisi ini selaras dengan teori ekspektasi Vroom (1964) yang menyatakan bahwa pilihan menjadi lebih menarik ketika alternatifnya dibatasi. Dengan demikian, kebebasan memilih yang ditawarkan oleh Netflix bersifat paradoksal, karena di satu sisi memberikan banyak opsi, tetapi di sisi lain mengarahkan preferensi pengguna melalui struktur algoritmik yang telah dirancang sebelumnya.

Lebih jauh, algoritma Netflix tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat rekomendasi, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme kontrol budaya. Molesworth et al. (2024) menegaskan bahwa sulit untuk menentukan sejauh mana pilihan menonton pengguna benar-benar otonom atau hasil dari intervensi algoritma. Algoritma tersebut membentuk pola konsumsi budaya tertentu dan memperkuat perspektif yang homogen, sebagaimana dikemukakan oleh Hroch et al. (2024) dan Siles et al. (2023) melalui konsep *algorithmic culture*. Contohnya, pengguna yang terus-menerus mengonsumsi genre tertentu, seperti komedi romantis atau serial penuh kekerasan seperti *Squid Game*, berpotensi melihat realitas sosial melalui sudut pandang yang sempit dan terdistorsi (Elliott, 2024).

Fenomena binge-watching menjadi salah satu dampak paling nyata dari algoritma rekomendasi Netflix. Zundel (2024) menyatakan bahwa binge-watching bukan sekadar pilihan individu, melainkan norma konsumsi yang secara sistematis didorong oleh platform streaming. Meskipun tampak memberikan kebebasan kepada pengguna, pola ini justru menciptakan ketergantungan dan keterlibatan berkelanjutan. Penelitian Bastos et al. (2024) memperkuat temuan tersebut dengan menunjukkan bahwa binge-watching yang tidak terkontrol dapat menimbulkan kelelahan, kehilangan persepsi waktu, hingga gangguan kesehatan mental. Dengan demikian, algoritma berperan sebagai instrumen strategis dalam mempertahankan loyalitas pengguna dan memaksimalkan waktu konsumsi.

Selain memengaruhi konsumen, algoritma Netflix juga berdampak pada tenaga kerja dan struktur organisasi internal. Kosciesza (2024) mengungkapkan bahwa keberadaan *human taggers* menunjukkan bagaimana pekerja manusia dimodifikasi untuk melayani kebutuhan algoritma. Di sisi lain, algoritma juga digunakan untuk menilai kinerja dan potensi karyawan (Juego et al., 2024), sehingga memperluas logika algoritmik ke dalam ranah manajemen sumber daya manusia. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa algoritma tidak hanya mengatur konsumsi budaya, tetapi juga relasi kerja dalam ekonomi digital.

Meskipun demikian, kekuasaan algoritma tidak bersifat absolut. Siles et al. (2023) menegaskan bahwa algoritma bersifat dinamis dan terus dibentuk oleh praktik pengguna. Pengguna dapat mengakali sistem rekomendasi melalui berbagi akun, penggunaan VPN, atau pemakaian perangkat bersama, sehingga rekomendasi yang dihasilkan tidak selalu mencerminkan preferensi individual secara murni. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya ruang agensi bagi pengguna dalam menghadapi dominasi algoritmik, meskipun ruang tersebut tetap berada dalam batas-batas yang ditentukan oleh platform.

The liberal-individual perspective places strong emphasis on consumer autonomy, assuming that individuals are rational actors capable of freely choosing media content without interference from the state or traditional media gatekeepers (Loecherbach et al., 2020). Within this framework, digital platforms such as Netflix are often portrayed as enablers of freedom, offering users an extensive catalogue of content that can be accessed at any time according to personal preferences. Personalization algorithms, in this sense, appear to enhance consumer sovereignty by tailoring recommendations to individual tastes. However, this apparent freedom must be critically examined, as algorithmic personalization does not merely reflect user preferences but actively shapes and directs them through continuous data-driven modulation.

From a critical perspective, the freedom offered by Netflix's recommendation system can be understood as illusory rather than genuine. Although users are technically free to choose any available content, their decision-making processes are subtly guided by algorithmic cues, such as ranked recommendations, highlighted thumbnails, and autoplay features. These mechanisms prioritize content that aligns with users' past viewing behavior, thereby narrowing the range of options that are made salient at any given moment. As a result, consumer choice is not eliminated but structured in ways that favor predictability, engagement, and platform retention, rather than genuine exploration or diversity of cultural consumption.

This dynamic is closely related to the concepts of filter bubbles and echo chambers, which have been widely discussed in the context of algorithmic governance on digital platforms. Netflix's recommendation system operates by reinforcing patterns of similarity, ensuring that users are primarily exposed to content that matches their established preferences. Wolfowicz et al. (2023) highlight that such mechanisms, common across digital platforms, reduce exposure to alternative viewpoints and unfamiliar genres. Consequently, users are increasingly confined within personalized media environments that reproduce existing tastes and beliefs, limiting opportunities for cognitive diversity and cultural discovery.

The reinforcement of filter bubbles contributes directly to the normalization of binge-watching as a dominant mode of media consumption. When algorithms continuously recommend similar content, users are encouraged to engage in repetitive viewing cycles that reinforce habitual consumption patterns. Grossetti et al. (2021) argue that this environment amplifies confirmation bias, as users are rarely confronted with content that challenges their preferences or introduces new perspectives. Binge-watching, therefore, is not merely a voluntary leisure activity but a structurally induced behavior that sustains prolonged engagement within a closed digital ecosystem.

At the core of this system lies the commodification of personal data. Netflix's operational model relies heavily on the continuous collection and analysis of user behavioral data, including viewing duration, completion rates, and interaction patterns. As Birch et al. (2020) explain, such data is transformed into an economic asset within digital capitalism, enabling platforms to monetize user attention and predict future consumption. Aaltonen et al. (2021) further emphasize that this surveillance-based model allows platforms not only to anticipate consumer preferences but also to actively influence them, blurring the boundary between recommendation and manipulation.

This situation highlights a fundamental dilemma between consumer freedom and algorithmic control. While algorithms are often justified as tools that reduce information overload and enhance user experience, they simultaneously constrain meaningful choice by structuring decision environments in opaque ways. Fan and Liu (2022) argue that digital platforms reduce real choice by limiting the visibility of alternatives, even when those alternatives technically exist. In this context, consumers experience a form of false autonomy, where the perception of freedom masks the underlying governance of choices through algorithmic decision architectures (Dholakia et al., 2021).

In conclusion, algorithm-driven digital ecosystems such as Netflix embody a profound paradox between freedom and control. Although users appear to exercise autonomous choice, their consumption practices are deeply shaped by algorithmic recommendations and data commodification strategies. This paradox raises important ethical and regulatory questions regarding transparency, accountability, and consumer rights in digital markets. To move toward genuine consumer freedom, scholars such as de Marcellis-Warin et al. (2022) advocate for stronger regulatory frameworks and greater algorithmic transparency, ensuring that users are not merely passive subjects of algorithmic governance but informed participants in the digital economy.

E. CONCLUSION

Netflix, originally founded as a DVD rental service in 1997, has transformed into a streaming platform that relies on complex algorithms to maintain user engagement. These algorithms not only recommend content based on individual preferences but also use the behavioral patterns of groups with similar characteristics, encouraging specific viewing habits such as binge-watching. While it appears to offer consumer freedom, the platform actually narrows choices by structuring user preferences into a controlled recommendation framework. The phenomenon of binge-watching and automated recommendations increases customer retention but can have certain psychological effects and blur the lines between needs and wants. In addition, Netflix's algorithmic strategy encourages excessive consumerism and forms a uniform cultural consumption pattern. Although users have the opportunity to outsmart the algorithm by sharing accounts or using VPNs, algorithmic control still plays a major role in shaping their viewing experience and content preferences. Netflix's use of algorithmic control reflects broader trends in digital media consumption, where the promise of user freedom is moderated by the platform's operational logic, prioritizing engagement and profit. These findings underscore the need for critical awareness of how algorithmic systems influence consumption and the balance between consumer freedom and algorithmic governance in streaming services.

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