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Ideology in the Attention Economy: A Portal to the Post-truth Era

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Abstract

In 2016, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and *Time Magazine* arrived at "post-truth" as the word of the year. This work looks at post-truth through political, cultural, and commercial lenses, each reflecting an understanding of how competition operates in the ongoing shift from the information society to the attention economy. In the information society, the economy is mediated by dialogue, credible gatekeepers, and an overriding belief in the coherence of a societal centre—a collusion ideology prevails. On the other hand, attention markets reward attention-getters for fragmenting publics, selecting and curating different audiences, and cultivating loyalty and influence within a particular audience or public—a collision ideology takes hold. In this work, we depict the ideological implications of the shift from information to attention markets as helping to erode a market depiction of society as multiple communities jostling for a more prominent voice yet living beneath a shared tent or commons. Within the Attention Economy (AE), supply and demand dynamics eat into the big tent version of the public, carving out multiple contending publics adhering to a shared conviction in their data, facts, and images as accurate, virtuous, and informed while disparaging and viewing those adhering to others as misinformed. The collision and collusion ideology coincides in AE, heightening confusion and serving as a portal to the post-truth era.

Keywords

Attention economy, Attention markets, Collusion ideology; Collision ideology; Post-truth era

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Abstract:

In 2016, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and *Time Magazine* arrived at "post-truth" as the word of the year. This work looks at post-truth through political, cultural, and commercial lenses, each reflecting an understanding of how competition operates in the ongoing shift from the information society to the attention economy. In the information society, the economy is mediated by dialogue, credible gatekeepers, and an overriding belief in the coherence of a societal centre—a collusion ideology prevails. On the other hand, attention markets reward attention-getters for fragmenting publics, selecting and curating different audiences, and cultivating loyalty and influence within a particular audience or public—a collision ideology takes hold. In this work, we depict the ideological implications of the shift from information to attention markets as helping to erode a market depiction of society as multiple communities jostling for a more prominent voice yet living beneath a shared tent or commons. Within the Attention Economy (AE), supply and demand dynamics eat into the big tent version of the public, carving out multiple contending publics adhering to a shared conviction in their data, facts, and images as accurate, virtuous, and informed while disparaging and viewing those adhering to others as misinformed. The collision and collusion ideology coincides in AE, heightening confusion and serving as a portal to the post-truth era.

Key Terms: Information society, Attention economy, Attention markets, Collusion ideology; Collision ideology; Post-truth era.

Introduction

There is increasing recognition within the social sciences that the designation of modern society as an "information society" (Webster, 2014) succeeds in delineating it from its predecessor, the "industrial society." However, as the information society evolves, it fails to identify why information remains at its core and what bits of information are valuable to whom and when (Franck, 2019). Those concerned that the "information society" umbrella concept conceals its base and no longer focuses on what is valuable rethink and relocate scarcity as a crucial determinant of value. What is disconcerting is that in the information society, data, facts, and images are freely accessible (Boczkowski, 2021). The stress and time required to navigate through the glut or surplus of information (Andrejevic, 2013) point toward scarcity as attention is paid to relevant information. The origin of the attention economy insists that in an era of abundantly available low-cost information, what is scarce and valuable are time (Alaoui and Germano, 2020) and skills (Glynn et al., 2022) required to search, access, and understand relevant data, facts, and information. In the information society, the relevant information is in short order; bits of information that satisfy the curiosity of an audience or public push less relevant information out of the high-value zone (Bueno, 2016).

For social scientists, the "attention economy" (AE) does not dismiss information (Davenport and Volpel, 2001). Instead, it focuses on the centrality, pursuit, and competition for relevant information understood as attention-getting information (Lanham, 2006). In other words, when working with the AE designation rather than that of the information society, what is relevant is information that individuals, groups, organizations, and networks deem valuable and to which they pay attention. The greater the time, number of participants, and reach, the more relevant and valuable the information in that ecology of attention (Citton, 2017). In these attention markets, competing combinations of data, facts, and images organized by attention merchants or signallers pull in two directions. They draw or aggregate an audience or public who shares the information deemed relevant and valuable to create competition between the publics, each insisting upon its version of the facts and data. In the information society depiction, the central point converges on availability or access to information (Beninger, 2009) as establishing a public assembled out of multiple publics.

The redirection of social scientists toward AE does not abandon the importance of information, particularly within the context of globalization and digitalization (Autio et al., 2021). Instead, it pushes information as digitalization progresses into a narrative in which competing versions of what information is valuable, relevant, and trustworthy coexist. In one version—the collusion ideology—attention markets enhance sharing, cooperation, and collaboration (Lim and Teoh, 2010). In the other version, AE drives home the crucial dynamics of value determination in the information society—the collision ideology. In it, competition for the scarce attention resource (Anderson and De Palma, 2012) allocates resources through a cluster of contending attention markets (Bordalo et al., 2016). Attention market supply and demand dynamics bolster and support a post-truth ideology, in which one's worldview is confirmed when shared with others (collusion) and framed as misinformed by those supporting others' data, facts, and images (collision).

This paper highlights how AE provides social scientists with an understanding of how the competition for attention in the pursuit of information relevance has become a portal to understanding one of the portals to the post-truth era. Towards this end, we parcel the discussion into four sections. First, we focus on attention markets in AE. We argue that the three M's (mark, measure, and manage) used to establish information as relevant, hence valuable to targeted publics, puts two contradictory ideological positions in motion. Second, we examine the collusion ideology, a bright side AE depiction, in which attention markets loosen and decentralize the center resulting in a healthy relativism in which multiple publics with diverse input enhance societal resilience and stimulate innovation. Third, in the dark side collision ideology, the center no longer holds, and the healthy relativism of a forward-thinking, dialogue-based society erodes. The collision ideology focuses on attention markets fragmenting the public into multiple contending publics. These contentious publics collide, each adhering to its data, facts, and images as relevant information. We argue that the simultaneous pull of attention markets towards aggregation within a public and fragmentation across publics helps explain the rising importance of internal solidarity of data, facts, and images within the public and the prevalence of misinformation, even conspiratorial motives in the misinformation bandied about by others.

Information Relevance

Social scientists draw attention to the role of commodification, technological innovation, and the increasing importance of information used to signal a shift from manufacturing to the less fungible and measurable notion of services with augmented technology tied to the Internet (Fuchs, 2007). The industrial society (Badham, 2014) with factories and growing cities highlights the commodification of material goods and distribution of power, influence, and authority to those who own, invest, and manage these assets. The industrial society replaces a rural-agrarian depiction of the pre-industrial society. The economic institutions in farming, the extraction of natural resources, and the control and ownership of the land predominate (Ogilvie, 2007). The post-industrial society (Bell, 1976) transforms from an industrial to service-based information society (Masuda, 1981). We focus attention on the centrality of "information relevance" as the generative root pushing the social sciences forward on creating, searching, and capitalizing on attention resulting in a shift in authority from hierarchical systems to algorithmic governance (Danaher et al., 2017) vested in shifting digital attention markets (Cennamo, 2021). In ideological terms, the information society establishes the viability of healthy relativism, an ideology of constructive collusion. Dialogue tied to the adaptive capacity of markets draws together varying publics. On the other hand, attention market dynamics in AE support a post-truth collision ideology in which contending data, facts, and images pull a public into competing publics.

We start with Herbert Simon's argument (Kalantri, 2010), first articulated in 1971 and more fully developed by others (Tanner, 2020). Simon foreshadowed the term "information overload" when he noted that "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention" (1971:40). To Simon and more contemporary advocates of AE (Ocasio, 2011), the abundance of information increases the need to pay attention or alter one's agenda given new and changing information. To what or whom should one "pay" attention arose from Simon's preliminary musings and gave birth to the interest in attention markets as a central driver in establishing value in AE (Pearson et al., 2022). Three questions arise when one turns attention to markets. First, what are attention markets, and how do they distribute power and authority? The second asks how the access to relevant information once the role of human agents as gatekeepers has shifted to algorithmic authority (Bucher, 2018) operating on AI-managed platforms (Raisch and Krakowski, 2021) and fed by flows of social media-related big data (Esfhani et al., 2019). The last question addresses the push and pull relationship between attention market demand and supply, giving rise to a bright side AE depiction with the healthy relativism of the collusion ideology and in tandem with the fractious collision ideology establishing a portal to the post-truth era (Deligiaouri, 2018).

Attention markets (Bachmann and Siegert, 2021) occur when attention merchants—the supply side in the markets—curate or select data, facts, and images to target a demand-side audience. In AE, attention merchants look for the payoff that arises when they successfully curate information and manage to convert an audience into committed, trusting followers. In this context, the verb "pay" is not a linguistic convention (De Castell and Jenson, 2004). To pay attention to X means one either lessens or dilutes concentration directed to Y or disregards Y, investing more of one's time and scarce attention to X. (Stroud, 2007). Those who mark, measure, and manage to draw attention to what is deemed relevant will carry the day in attention markets (Ibrahim, 2012). Metaphorically, one can think of the shifting nature of awareness in AE by imagining cooking on a multi-burner stove. As one proceeds with the preparation, more attention flows to the contents on hot burners: information relevance or hot information—those who make it hot anticipate and

align attention-capturing messages (Brady et al., 2020). Gatekeepers no longer determine and grant access to relevant information but attract attention from curators (Davis, 2017) who mark, measure, and manage information relevance, thereby brokering and matching supply with demand.

The payoff on the demand side in AE rests on three benefits. Those heeding the data, facts, and images of a market-embedded attention seeker (Roberts, 2012) or merchant (Wu, 2017) feel that the message aligns with their worldview and supports their values. Second, as audiences increasingly share this information with others, they reduce uncertainty and affirm that their shared data, facts, and images are correct. The conviction that they are correct is aided and abetted by the echo-chamber-like resonance (Quattrociocchi, 2017) of attention markets. Within the demand side in these markets, those who pay attention to other data, facts, and images are misinformed (Hendricks and Vestergaard, 2019). Attention market dynamics have implications for understanding competing versions of AE as a Janus-faced ideology. One facet—the bright side collusion ideology—celebrates AE as a healthy relativism giving rise to the decentralization of authority and escalating diversity, working in tandem to produce societal benefits. The other facet—the dark side of post-truth collusion ideology—positions decentralization and diversity as producing multiple fractious versions of the public. The breakdown of the commons or the public into multiple contending publics scuttles the healthy relativism assumed in the collusion ideology. It results in a modern tragedy of the commons in which polarized positions adhered to uncompromisingly serve as a portal to the post-truth era (Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

Both AE ideologies arise in the attention market dynamics, which establish how attention seekers influence and are influenced in their pursuit of audiences which are valuable to advance their goals. Supply-side seekers in attention markets seed and nurture positions (Gelper et al., 2021) to attract demand-side audiences by adhering to the three M's—mark, measure, and manage—to make the information relevant (see Figure 1). First, attention markets "mark" or map potentially relevant issues (Marres, 2015) and align the information flagged with a receptive audience or public. In AE, issue mapping is a form of curation or selection of data, facts and images that align with the worldview and values of a targeted or, in AE terms, "co-created" audience or public (Ramaswamy and Ozcan, 2014). This co-creation brings the message signaler or supplier and the receiver demand closer via technology and the curation of data, facts and images selected for its drawing potential. This "marked" information is not intended to convene "the public" but rather to draw the attention of specific publics. In commercial curation, attention merchants acknowledge the financial rewards of publicity, public relations, and advertising as drawing audiences to a message which, when successful, converts them into consumers (Puschmann and Powell, 2018) of a particular product or service. In governments, non-profit organizations, and social movements, attention curators select data, facts, and images to gain the assent or, at times, votes of those whom they want to transform from an audience into followers (Rohrs, 2013). The importance of AE rests in its recognition that commercial attention management is no longer only applied to private sector firms. It is now prevalent in all portions of society. Attention merchants, including public agencies, non-profit organizations, and social movements, enter attention markets to harvest resources aligned with their missions or goals. Attention markets thrive in the escalating climate of quantified or scored digital connectivity, stimulating both sharing and competition and altering intellectual property positions (Kerber, 2016) to align attention-gathering facts, data, and images with new emerging attention-getting trends.

Figure 1

Attention Markets: Mark, Measure, Manage

AI Function	AE Dynamics
Mark	In attention markets, information is marked or differentiated to align with the perspectives of a targeted audience or public. On the supply side, information is curated so that data, facts, and images are embedded in a narrative that draws a public. On the demand side, the targeted public share the marked and curated message. While colluding inward and sharing these truths, they disparage those who adhere to opposing data, facts, and symbols.
Measure	Attention markets, like all markets, provide participants with quantitative measures. Algorithmic measures tied to platforms employing artificial intelligence (AI) provide attention merchants (supply-side) with a means of comparing their audience-drawing prowess against others. In turn, audiences use these scores to measure the size and influence of those with whom they share their data, facts, and images.
Manage	Management transforms attention into resources employing both a pull towards cooperation or collaboration and a push to compete or collide with others. The collusion ideology stresses the build-up and coherence of a varied public within a shared normative version of the commons. In managing attention markets, the collision ideology produces results and draws more attention by disparaging those with opposing facts.

The second M in the scored society (Citron et al., 2014) focuses on attention markets "measuring" supply and demand to evaluate and assess the relevance or attention-drawing power of data, facts, and images to determine the targeted audience. The measures tied to the increasing use of social media supported by algorithmic programmes (Liang, 2022) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) enable both supply and demand to assess the size and influence of the attention captured by various messages (Baeza-Yates and Fayad, 2022). In turn, the audience relying upon varied rankings like the top of the page in search engines or recommender systems interprets the scores as a measure of the size, strength, and importance of the public sharing the message. While social scientists are drawn to overwhelmingly popular audiences drawing viral information (Boynton, 2009), attention curators seeking to extract resources from targeted audiences prefer attention-getting signals which are sticky and retain targeted audiences. Attention capture enables those with differing worldviews to point to followers to legitimize

their position (Russell-Neumann et al., 2014). Without the objectivity and comparability of these scores, it becomes difficult for attention merchants to anticipate emerging trends and for audiences to reassure others within their ingroup that their worldview retains its relevance. At the center of AE, successful competitors in attention markets not only draw and retain an audience or targeted public but manage to convert this public into resources. These publics remain assured by the frequency and trust (Sterrett et al., 2019) they place when their views, expressed in the curated worldview, are shared and repeated by trusted others in their ingroup.

The third M, "management" (see Figure 1), turns audiences into resources by gaining its members' trust, loyalty, and commitment. Getting attention is vital, measuring it useful but managing it, meaning converting it into resources, is indispensable and the main reason AE advocates employ a platform-focused market model to extend its logic (Evans, 2019). The attention merchants get followers and convert these into resources, for instance, non-profits into funding or volunteers, religious institutions into believers, profit-orientated firms into capital, political parties into party members and, over time, voters. On the demand side, audiences share, create an ingroup with whom they share information and simultaneously identify an irksome outgroup, namely those who hold a contrary message. Attention management generates a paradox within the three M's (see Fig 1). It establishes a coherent logic of collusion. At the same time, it establishes the momentum for collision. Collusion arises as the targeted audience coheres. The curated data, facts, and images organized by a set of colluding attention merchants ride the creative destruction of competition to establish a worldview increasingly confirmed when shared by others (Hira et al., 2017). Collision coexists with collusion as AE merchants establish trust and commitment with followers by pointing to irksome others, both merchants and audiences, adhering to different, often contradictory data, facts, and images (Davis and Jurgenson, 2014). The two—collusion and collision—coexist, creating a debate, rampant in social media research, over the stability or collapse of context (Loh and Walsh, 2021), which serves as a portal to discussions of the post-truth era (d'Ancona, 2017).

Attention Economy: Collusion

In AE, both collusion and collision coexist. The bright side rendering of AE extends the logic of the post-industrial or information society in its assumption that ease of access to and increased sharing of information fosters dialogue, public participation, and enhancement of a collaborative community (Popescu and Ciurlau, 2019). Collusion in AE frames attention competition in attention markets as a form of creative destruction (Laurell and Sandstrom, 2018) with long-term positive outcomes. Those who successfully compete in AE open information exchange channels with diverse stakeholders enhance public involvement and diverse inputs, which in tandem spur innovation (Rhee and Leonardi, 2018). In the collusion ideology, AE segments the public into multiple publics and handles this segmentation positively by calling upon the existing normative institutions of education, law, and the church. The metaphor in the collusion ideology is that attention is divided into multiple tracks, all running along in tandem. Information is marked, measured, and managed so that a thousand flowers bloom, and the whole coheres, resulting in a healthy, resilient, adaptive society. Even those who protest the data, facts, and images of others work within attention markets and curate data, facts, and images intended to draw and convert an audience.

This bright side version of AE reinforces an orderly foundation. It girds and gives a positive direction to the relativism that arises as the public turns into multiple, often divisive but orderly

publics. The foundation of the collusion ideology rests with the assumption that in AE, the center holds and that despite an increase in diverse inputs, civility between the rivalrous participants in attention markets prevails. Exploring society as a welter of differing marked, measured, and managed attention-getting worldviews (Keith and Danisch, 2021) adds depth, flexibility, and freedom to a multi-centred knowledge aggregating commons (Hess and Ostrom, 2007). Three interrelated attention market dynamics cohere in establishing this shared progressive commons within the collusion ideology.

First, on the supply side, attention markets reward those who curate data, facts, and images to draw, retain and convert the audience into trusted followers (Arnesson, 2022). Second, on the demand side, differing audiences are drawn to a set of data, facts, and images, thereby locating a community or ingroup sharing their position and disparaging those who challenge their worldview. On the demand side, the shared worldview of the ingroup generates a sense of certainty, membership, and belonging in an otherwise disputatious and anomic society (Bennett and Livingstone, 2018). Third, society benefits as attention markets diminish the power and authority of vertically organized command and control systems. This loosening of the center without forfeiting order enables society to adapt more flexibly to change and gives rise to different perspectives from heretofore silenced viewpoints (Sloam, 2016).

The collusion ideology identifies a sweet spot or middle ground in attention markets wherein the self-interested concerns of competition marry successfully with the cooperative benefits required to maintain, grow, and reward participants (Snow, 2015). The fragmentation of attention into data, facts and images targeting an audience splinters the idea of the public into a series of publics. These distinct publics aligned to the data, facts and images shared with other followers associated with specific attention merchants join, creating a network or commons (Ostrom, 1990) in which many melding of diverse positions enhance (collusion) rather than reduce (collision) adaptive capacity. The collusion ideology frames the commons as having multiple competing centers which coordinate the collusion as a polycentric governance system (Carlisle and Grubie, 2019). Like brainstorming in the early stages of creativity, this polycentric coordination in AE generates a vital, healthy form of relativism in which fragmentation into multiple publics establishes a portal for further expansion and exploration (Hauser, 2022). This exploration occurs at four levels within the collusion ideology in AE. The first level (see Figure 1) is the argument for increased choice in the proliferation of messages offered by competing attention merchants and the freedom to choose and aggregate multiple message formats for the audience or supply side. Increased choice is joined by low barriers to entry, sharing, and continuous updating to establish healthy relativism within the collusion ideology.

Figure 2

Attention Economy: Collusion Ideology

Ideology Drivers	Collusion Ideology Characteristics
The center weakens but holds	In the Attention Economy (AE), collusion ideology is aided by the decentralization of authority due to heightened connectivity, mobile communication, and the prevalence of accessible information. Creativity, innovation, and social resilience are bolstered when marginal voices break into the polycentric, multi-party conversation. Newcomers sharpen awareness and stimulate innovation.
Controversy supports innovation	The thinning of the old boy's network or previous elite at the once prominent center gives rise to controversy and debate. This openness to new ideas within the norms of collaboration in a network of polycentric conversations handles differences in viewpoints by filtering out noise and attending to issues which rise to the top in the marked, measured, and managed attention economy.
Noise moves attention	In attention markets, noise gathers a crowd. It rewards participants. Attention getters mobilize under-structured patterns and discordant trends to update facts, data, and images, thus growing and capitalizing upon their audience. In turn, on the supply side, the audience is rewarded when disturbing elements in the new patterns are rendered sensible. In this meeting of attention, demand, and supply, collaboration and sharing create a dynamic public or shared commons.
Collaborative commons flourishes	In the collusion ideology, the varied data, facts, and images are sorted and filtered across different publics. Beneath the different viewpoints, an agreement emerges on priorities as competing publics vie for resources within the commons. The competition between the publics with different points of view supports and escalates change. This change drives markets to expand their interests and rewards new attention-getting information.

The collusion ideology tells a good and uplifting AE story whereby the decentralization of power and authority or the flattening of vertical command and control structures increases individual choice (Madianou and Miller, 2013). With its advancing technologies of digitalization,

connectivity, and mobility, AE transforms the stakeholder-like consumer prevalent in earlier market models into collaborative prosumers (Beer and Burrows, 2010), adding information through their ongoing connection. In AE, under the banner of differing publics existing in systems with multiple governance signalers, dialogue (Ganesh and Zoller, 2012) as a means of building bridges between communities with differences gives way to the polylogue (Chen, 2010). Simultaneously occurring conversations in which participants orient to those with whom they form temporary alliances, polylogues diminish the focal notion of a centre and replace it with multiple centers (Ostrom, 2010). The relativism of the multi-centred conversation enhances individual choice yet retains order since the polylogue, like its dialogue-based predecessor, assures that the participants share a vocabulary despite their differences. When one places the bright side collusion ideology next to its dark side cousin, the collision ideology, the former reads like the Tower of Babel story (Gravier and Lundquist, 2016) before introducing multiple different languages, and the latter resemble the subsequent cessation of work on the Tower.

The healthy relativism in attention markets enables people to work together. Indeed, it applauds difference as adding new information to a system that would otherwise remain mired in a slowly evolving routine. In the collusion ideology, AE lowers the barrier to entry (see Figure 2) for participants in attention markets and escalates the creative disruption (Aghion et al., 2021) of a dynamic adaptive system. On the supply side, attention merchants celebrate the disruption churn accompanying recurrent game-changing technological innovations and their application in medicine, entertainment, politics, and business. In the innovator's dilemma (Christensen, 2013), the once-established elite's problem is how to retain one's centrality during the recurring and unpredictable eruption of new attention merchants with viral signals and rapidly growing audiences. On the demand side of AE, collusion addresses the increased number of individuals with access to attention markets and the ability to become participants when sharing information with others and the attention merchants. The lowered barriers to entry in the demand and supply sides of attention markets celebrated in the AE collusion ideology spell out heightening participation and tightening the relationship between and among differing publics, even embracing the tension between publics and counter publics (Warner, 2021).

In AE, the bright side collusion ideology applauds heightened well-being borne by mobile digital connectivity and stresses how diverse inputs enhance democracy and foster greater social responsibility (Vandeen Abeele and Ngyuen, 2022). At the core of this version of AE, sharing (Belk, 2010), treated commercially in varying forms of applied e-commerce (Turban et al., 2018), such as e-learning, e-health, and e-government, is given a positive gloss when it is referred to as the sharing economy (Schor and Fitzmaurice, 2015). In the sharing economy, attention market supply meets and creates demand by using shared data, information, and images to personalize offerings and adapt swiftly or pivot to the changing trends picked up and measured on digital platforms (Sutherland and Jarrahi, 2018). Bright side AE proponents frame this responsiveness not as adherence to fads and fashion but as a responsible inculcation of the demands of varying publics. Sharing in AE enables the continuous flow of updated information among participants in the attention market. New ideas germinate with artificial intelligence tools (AI) and advances in algorithmic applications (Stark and Pais, 2020).

Within AE, the collusion idea works on the heightened connectivity of attention markets which absorb and update information within the possibilities of technology-enabled big data (Tsai et al., 2015). The multi-centred or polycentric skeins of connectivity enable diversity and inhibit a static reliance upon tradition. Instead, the collusion ideology in AE speaks to a viable form of

prospective sensemaking (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012) in which new and updated information becomes integrated into the curated messages supplied by attention merchants and aligned with the audiences. The coexistence of messages tied to different audiences leads not only to fragmentation (Webster and Kisiasek, 2012) but to the amassing and coordinating (Heimbacht and Hinz, 2018) of big data on updating information platforms and resilient open society. In AE, healthy relativism manages the noise of multiple coexisting streams of data facts and images by inculcating it into attention markets with marked, measured, and managed streams of attention. Rather than a healthy relativism, those who frame AE within the collision ideology treat attention markets as escalating and fragmenting publics into fractious camps, each viewing itself as the fount of credible data, facts, and images irksome others as misinformed or worse, maliciously conspiratorial. In the collision, ideology noise moves from the background to the forefront, and with noise tied to claims of information relevance, problems ensue (Hendricks and Vestergaard, 2019).

Attention Economy: Collision Ideology

While the collusion lens taken to AE supports healthy relativism, radical relativism pushes the community in a new and problematic direction within the collision ideology. Increased options fueled by diverse and continually updating information when pushed break into an anomic, often paralyzing, choice (Schwartz, 2020). In AE, collision ideology envisions relativism or multi-centered diverse attention audiences as problematic for three reasons. First, the collision ideology posits a threshold or tipping point, arguing that as relativism increases in frequency and ubiquity, divisive and paralyzing relationships escalate, establishing a paradoxical shift in the idea of a healthy community. Second, the paradox of the relativism of diverse publics reinforces community within publics but costly fragmentation between and among them. In this collision of coherence with segmentation, the center dissolves as the norms of public tolerance give way to a bellicose insistence that the data, facts, and images of one's audience or community of choice are fact-based truthful (Jasonoff and Simmet, 2017). Others are misinformed (Jost et al., 2018), dishonest, and deceptive (Keyes, 2004). Third, the collision ideology taken in tandem with expectations established through the collusion lens points to society as entering the danger zone of the post-truth era (Maddalena and Gili, 2020) during the clash between self-anointed, truth-telling in-groups and irksome misinformed others. AE is a structural portal rewarding and reinforcing the multiplying curation of data, facts, and images without supporting a shared commons (Harambam et al., 2022).

The collision ideology in AE explores the tragedy of the commons not in fungible resources but the loss of ideas in the proliferation of multiple voices drawing attention in different directions (Wagner, 2015), generating neither the flexibility nor innovative potential suggested by the collusion ideology but noise (Kahnman et al., 2022). Typically, noise pollution or background noise is a factor in increasing uncertainty. The collusion ideology reduces noise through regulation, specialization, and technology. Facts are checked (Walter et al., 2020), and those who check, such as scientists and credentialed authorities, are credible. Without going too far, the regulation addresses the laws, policies, and rules that fine individuals honk automobile horns in a hospital zone or blast sound systems late into the evening. Specialization in collusion reduces noise by turning uncertainty in public concern into credentialed experts or gatekeepers whose data, facts, and images, for example, those of the empire or referee in a sports match, determine who is right. In AE, digital technology aggregates, updates, and ranks data in an accessible form

so that the public gaze or commons is delineated at any time. In the collision ideology, the center does not hold, and fact-checking loses its ability to unite the public (Hameleers, 2022).

The collision ideology addresses how noise—a background factor in the collusion perspective—interferes with the sensemaking dialogue (Derwin and Foreman-Wernet, 2012) and norms of tolerance (Van Doorn, 2014) as polycentricity weakens the center resulting in distraction and then destructive forms of paralysis (Huber et al., 2012). In the collision ideology, noise occurs at two interrelated levels. The first focuses on the proliferation, updating, and investment by both the attention supplier and audiences in data, facts, and images which explain events or make sense of uncertainty. This first level speaks to noise as the jabbering of many-splintering publics. These differentiated audiences are confident in their data, facts, and images from a trusted, shared source (Van Swol, 2007). The second level drives home the term "collision" in the collision ideology and addresses noise as polarizing and paralyzing. The fragmentation of the public into multiple audiences forms a collision when these publics view others as misinformed, or worse, conspiratorially minded (Valaskiva, 2022). Noise enables those with a preferred worldview bound in curated and updated data, facts, and images to discount others and treat their positions as fake, false, and untrue (Spoelstra, 2022). This noise-bearing controversy amplifies background noise and casts doubt on the legitimacy of those in governance and authority roles. As the multiplicity of the publics becomes more assured in confirming truths with those in their echo chamber (Karlsen et al., 2017), an acceptance of society-wide regulation begins to crumble, and credentialed experts seem less trustworthy.

These once legitimate gatekeepers entrusted with bringing different publics into the shared commons lose ground as attention markets rife with market-based social filters (Spohr, 2017) reinforce the ingroup's data, facts, and images. Thus, in AE, the collision ideology treats noise as a primary driver in dissolving the information commons and acting as a portal to the post-truth era. The four pillars of the dark side collision ideology (see Figure 3) play havoc with the collusion ideology. First, the stabilizing influence if the center dissolves. Second, dialogue tied to a norm of healthy relativism and tolerance of "different" others diminishes its reach. Third, noise is managed and drifts into the background in the collusion ideology. However, ideology takes the front stage in the collision as information relevance is continuously revised.

Figure 3

Attention Economy: Collision Ideology

Ideology Drivers	Collision Ideology Characteristics
The center does not hold	In the collision ideology, the center no longer holds. Polycentricity tied to multiple competing centers divides the public into a network of publics. The collision ideology predominates when attention follows the path of ongoing heated debates over the data, facts and images held by different publics. With weakened trust in the center's mediating role, this debate intensifies to the point where the term "culture war" takes hold.
Controversy is politicized and weaponized	The heated debate or growing controversy over what is real or fake or what is true or false adds fuel to attention markets. Attention seekers (supply) employ controversy to retain, grow and convert audiences into trusting followers. In turn, audiences (market demand) escalate their commitment and drive to convert new members to establish the reach and influence of their data, facts, and images.
Noise moves to the frontstage impeding rational coordination	In the collision ideology, truth is a casualty of the heated debate in a setting without mediators. Typically debates adhering to rules and a mechanism establishing which position carries the day. The collision ideology noise, or the crosstalk of multiple simultaneous conversations, replaces the norm adhering version of the dialogue. In the collision ideology, ambiguity thrives, and the knowledge commons is endangered.
The new platformed-based commons is endangered	In the collision ideology, two features endanger the commons. The first arises as data, facts, and images are not negotiable but positions valued by a shared community. Compromise with those holding opposing views violates ingroup norms. Second, the data, facts and images are updated in line with trending data. Audiences hold fast to a position that aligns with one's ingroup and frame contending positions as false.

In the collusion ideology, the center loosens but holds; in the collision ideology, the center begins to unravel. Attention markets increase the number of legitimate and credible points of view, making it easy to attain agreement with a public but a demanding feat (Kluver and Back,

2019) across bickering publics and within society. In the collusion ideology, multiple points of view, for example, expert panelists, serve as agents of distinct narratives tied to data, facts, and images (Langveldt, 2004). The multi-party panel of agents enters a dialogue, presenting a complex case in which noise is put into context. The conflicting tensions in paradox are contextual for varying audiences with varying data, facts, and images (Calton and Payne, 2003). In the collision ideology, the dissolution of the center occurs as the audiences turn away from the representative multi-agent panel. The public aligned with a narrative prefers a less complicated conversation untainted by the views of those with misinformation. As worldviews and ease of access proliferate, noise becomes decontextualized and fractious publics or audiences insist that those who adhere to other data, facts, and images are wrong. Worse, they have been deceived and now firmly believe in these alternative truths (Van Boven et al., 2000).

The problem of the irksome other in the collusion ideology is a tale of the poorly socialized or deviant individual failing to recognize the legitimate norms of the commons (Bicchieri, 2005). In the collision ideology, the irksome other is inherent to building audiences in AE. Lowering barriers to entry in attention markets—both on the supply and demand sides (see Figure 2)—enables those with varied worldviews to locate, even at the time, to recruit like-minded audiences at a distance and with varying levels of commitment (Napoli, 2011). The "other," in the collusion perspective, becomes the irksome other in the collision ideology. The representativity of the panel speaking on behalf of varied publics dissolves as the number of publics in attention markets increases, and they have direct access to a market, enabling them to curate data, facts, and images that represent their position. The "irksome other" is not as easily tolerated as the collusion ideology version of "the other." Self-anointed ingroups cast aspersions on those whose data, facts, and images vie for attention and contradict the positions of the ingroup. Audiences grow and increasingly share ingroup information when they believe irksome others with misinformation stand ready to challenge them. One must recall that in AE, these positions are not the loopy expressions of individuals but the aggregated voices of a shared community or ingroup updating their data, facts, and images to keep them on trend and in play. Like the outgroup of irksome others, the ingroup points to data, facts, and images treated as evidence, and each call upon their version of the influencer (Kim and Kim, 2021) bolstered by a supportive audience to stand by and protect these truths (Farkas and Schou, 2019).

Sharing reveals its dark side in the collision ideology. (Murillo et al., 2017) It turns audience or publics other than the one which one identifies with as a community of misinformed others (Effron and Helgason, 2022). Given the dissolving center, these misinformed, irksome others are no longer an agreed-upon population of the usual suspects, transgressives needing rehabilitation. In the unhealthy relativism of the collision ideology, they are a community with their institutions and leaders with a version of the data facts and images that draw attention and are trusted. The friction between self-anointed, fact-based, reliable, and truth-telling publics with their worldview and those they view as misinformed, unreliable, and conspiratorial (Robertson et al., 2022) points to the impact of the collision. The impact of the collision in the post-truth era is often expressed in political terms as a toxic form of polarization (Moore-Berg et al., 2020). In dialectical terms, as the collusion ideology insists, polarized positions are open to negotiation and resolution by establishing panels in which complex messaging with alternatives is broadcast to the public. In the collision ideology, the shared reward of sharing is not with those with whom one disagrees but is heavily invested in building a vocabulary with like-minded others.

The worrisome component of the collision ideology rests with the logic highlighting its staying power. The strength of the bridging mechanisms in the collusion ideology, such as fact-checking, diminishes as the updating and continued modification of the curated data, facts, and images gain momentum (Hameleer and Van der Meer, 2020). The tenacity of AE as a portal to the post-truth era highlights the collision ideology as dangerous because it is not simply a brief attention market failure. Within attention markets, noise moves into the foreground, polarizes, and assures contending and contentious publics that the facts are on their side. The varying and different facts, data, and images created in attention markets stay aligned with their target audiences as new trends, and emerging information are curated into the mix. The collusion ideology celebrates the vitality of decentralization empowered by AE and the escalation of informational input from multiple points of view as enhancing innovation and public engagement. The collision ideology looks at the same data, facts, and images. However, it turns dark, envisioning AE as a portal to the post-truth era and worrying that entrenched insistence upon multiple truths is not the basis for healthy relativism. The collusion ideology projects AE as a portal to the post-truth era by raising a warning sign pushing concerns about how to get science and facts into public currency. It raises the spectre of forcing a strong-arm government with a justification for using the military to break through the paralyzing volume of information as noise.

Conclusion

Contemporary interest in AE grows out of the rib of information society research highlighting the shift from the industrial to post-industrial service society and within the service sector to the significance of information as an increasingly valuable resource. AE researchers build on this position, noting that as information becomes more easily accessible and freely available, it is not information that is scarce and valuable but attention. Attention understood in the context of attention markets is treated as information believed to be relevant or paid attention to by an audience. AE research examines not only the supply and demand dynamics of attention markets; it highlights the clash of two competing ideologies, each interpreting AE and multiple coexisting audiences or publics differently. The bright side collusion ideology posits AE as a healthy relativism in which the center holds despite the escalation of divergent publics adhering to different data, facts, and images. The collusion ideology frames AE as enhancing resilience, flexibility, and innovation. In the collision ideology, the relativism established in attention markets endangers the center. The appeal to dialogue, social norms, and trust in the collusion ideology erodes.

In the collision ideology, attention markets escalate, and consequently, flexibility, inclusion, and innovation stumble. However, over time, these return to a healthy equilibrium like all self-correcting versions of markets. AE offers room for further discussion in research on ideology in examining attention markets that fail to self-correct by examining the collision ideology. On the dark side, AE attention markets reward participants for updating and aligning data, facts and images tied to a public's worldview rather than engaging in the increasing time, cost, and difficulty generating evidence acceptable to all or most publics. The collision ideology accompanies these analyses with a dark warning. The warning treats noise as a background phenomenon accompanying it, fractious polarization resulting in systems with the potential for heightened anarchy and stultifying paralysis. It darkens as calls for strong-arm leaders armed with the skills of attention-getting and crowd-pleasing align data, facts, and images to manage followers, politicize, and then weaponize attention markets.

When researching ideology in AE, it is vital to realize that it is the coexistence of the collusion and collision ideologies that creates the conditions suitable for its investigation as one of the portals to the post-truth era. In tandem, the collusion ideology sets expectations for sharing, collaboration, individual freedom, and greater resilience; the collision ideology points towards a society in which decentralization taken too far or beyond the tipping point results in greater collaboration within a shared worldview but across increasingly divergent views the potential for multiple coexisting truths embedded in a system of no compromise resulting in paralysis and possible anarchy. The coexistence of these two ideological positions within the body of work on AE and attention markets creates a schism or rupture. The proponents of these two ideologies, using the same intellectual apparatus and dynamics, largely fail to integrate the voice of the other. When students of ideology embrace essential elements of the attention economy, it is vital to integrate and bring into play the tense relationship between collusion and collision.

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