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Algorithms, advertising and the intimacy of surveillance

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ABSTRACT

This article develops the notion of the intimacy of surveillance, a characteristic of contemporary corporate marketing and dataveillance fueled by the accumulation of consumers' economically valuable digital traces. By focusing on emotional reactions to targeted advertisements, we demonstrate how consumers want contradictory things: they oppose intrusive and creepy advertising based on tracking their activities, yet expect more relevant real-time analysis and probabilistic predictions anticipating their needs, desires, and plans. The tension between the two opposing aspects of corporate surveillance is crucial in terms of the intimacy of surveillance: it explains how corporate surveillance that is felt as disturbing can co-exist with pleasurable moments of being 'seen' by the market. The study suggests that the current situation where social media users are trying to comprehend, typically alone with their devices, what is going on in terms of continuously changing algorithmic systems, is undermining public culture. This calls for collective responses to the shared pleasures and pains while living alongside algorithms. The everyday distress and paranoia to which users of social media are exposed is an indicator of failed social arrangements in need of urgent repair.

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Across various domains, in fields from health to communication, in political life and the private sphere, the tracking and surveillance of the daily actions of consumers is expanding and becoming ever more fine-grained (Pridmore and Lyon 2011, Zuboff 2015, Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017). Consumers contribute to data gathering when they purchase goods and services online, take part in customer loyalty programs, use online search engines, click advertisements, upload content to social media platforms, or sign into other services with their personal Google ID or Facebook profile. The capacity to gather and analyze individuals' behavioral and geo-locational data, combined with the digital economy's classificatory mechanisms, and backed by algorithmic techniques and large volumes of quantitative data, suggest a new kind of intertwining of consumers and market aims (Andrejevic 2014, Fourcade and Healy 2017). As Fourcade and Healy describe (2017, pp. 10–11), the use of data and rules for calculation and prediction have a longer history, but a shift can be detected in the way the market operates as a classifier: personal records and the scores and segments derived from them are now tradable objects that act back on people, shaping intimate experiences and promoting behavioral modification. 'Markets have learned to "see" in a new way, and are teaching us to see ourselves in that way, too,' as Fourcade and Healy observe (2017, p. 10).

This article takes a closer look at how the market 'sees' the consumer – and how consumers react to that seeing – by focusing on emotional responses to targeted advertisements in social media sites

like Facebook and Instagram. The aim of the exercise is to posit digital marketing as a form of contemporary surveillance that employs consumption-oriented technologies and methods ‘to render consumers as both known and knowable entities’ (Pridmore and Lyon 2011, p. 115). We use the term ‘dataveillance’ to signal the shifts in the market, and in modes of surveillance that increasingly monitor users through social media and online communication technologies by means of sophisticated tracking technologies (Raley 2013, p. 124). Dataveillance aims at predictive and prescriptive outcomes in terms of consumer behavior, suggesting profound consequences for the market-consumer relationship. As van Dijck argues (2014), p. 205), dataveillance penetrates ‘every fiber of the social fabric,’ going well beyond intentions of monitoring individuals for specific purposes.

We treat dataveillance as a product of the accumulation of data by the machinery of corporate marketing, which collects digital traces of consumers, including likes, downloads, shares, and eye-balls, that have potential economic value (Zuboff 2015). The actions of users of online services remain open and visible to the surveillers, service developers, and marketers but, in the everyday, practices of online tracking tend to fade into the background. Tracking technologies are tolerated and ignored despite their larger political-economy context of surveillance, characterized by privacy threats and opaque forms of datafied power; indeed, people have few options *not* to participate as data-generating subjects (Andrejevic 2014, Michael and Lupton 2016, Skeggs and Yuill 2016, Lupton and Michael 2017). Fourcade and Healy (2017, p. 17) describe how the ‘matching’ of consumer data traces and corporate goals feels natural and effortless when the market is a successful classifier: when the cues about behavior that are left behind and extracted from users of social media sites generate a superior service experience or become part of an improved digital infrastructure. Personalized recommendation systems, for example, are seen as useful because they allow people to navigate vast amounts of information and find music, movies, or restaurants that they would not learn about otherwise.

Ultimately, these digital economy developments introduce infrastructural changes, emphasizing larger aims in terms of societal and economic restructuring than advertising and sales. In this paper, however, we are particularly interested in what happens in the consumer-corporate relationship in terms of the intimacy of increasingly pervasive, market-connected surveillance techniques. As explorations of intimacy call for psychological and psychoanalytical assessments of individually charged fears and desires, the notion of intimacy might appear counterintuitive in the context of corporate marketing. The goal is to draw attention to intimacy in this context: not to promote or demonize intimacy in the course of surveillance, but to better understand connected practices. As will be explained further below, we use the term ‘intimacy’ in a non-individualistic sense; it is a spatial rather than a psychological concept, used for mapping the emotional territory of consumption-oriented corporate surveillance that either supports the alignment of market interests with those of consumers, or violates their privacy and self-understandings. By introducing and developing the notion of ‘the intimacy of surveillance’ (Berson 2015, p. 40), we can address the friction and ambivalence that accompanies consumer reactions to corporate uses of personal data. Michael and Lupton (2016, p. 111) refer to the inconsistencies in opinions and the ambivalence that people feel towards corporate surveillance as ‘oscillatory awareness,’ emphasizing the co-existence of anxiety and routinized utility. Similarly, we demonstrate that consumer reactions to advertising and marketing practices remain various, situational, and deeply ambivalent.

The empirical data that we use for developing the notion of the intimacy of surveillance was gathered in a research project exploring everyday understandings of algorithms. We situate our analysis within the study of mundane experiences of data gathering and data analytics (Kennedy and Hill 2017, Lupton and Michael 2017, Kennedy 2018), highlighting shared understandings and reactions to ways in which corporately produced algorithms manifest in the everyday (Bucher 2017a; Seaver 2017). As Kennedy (2018) argues, research seeking to develop understanding of how ordinary people experience and live with data and algorithms is still rather limited. Critical public debate is intensifying over how data tracking by corporations undermines personal autonomy, liberty, and privacy, yet consumers continue to embrace the practices and products of social media and self-tracking. This

‘new intimacy of surveillance,’ as Berson (2015, p. 40) characterizes it, has been the focus of ethnographic inquiries into the social, narrative, and emotional dimensions of self-tracking and data practices (see Ruckenstein and Schüll 2017), yet, in terms of targeted advertising, little is known of how it might inform us about intimate aspects of corporate surveillance. Facebook’s revenue is predominantly ad-driven, which makes it ‘a powerful advertising oligopoly’ with promises of ‘accelerated time between product advert and sale’ (Skeggs and Yuill 2016, p. 381). At the same time, however, Facebook is considered a personal and social space which, as we demonstrate, at least partly explains why consumers react to online advertisements within social media the way they do.

In the following, we first define what is meant by the intimacy of surveillance, then outline briefly the context for the advertisement encounters that we explore, before describing how we studied the ‘seeing work’ of the market and how it might be understood as either disturbing and unsuccessful, or relevant and pleasing. The work by market agents of seeing and knowing the tastes and social relations of consumers, particularly when conducted by mechanical forces, can remain imperceptible to those whose data traces are being used. The invisibility indicates that the digital infrastructure, of which personal data collection is an integral part, has become naturalized. At times, however, attempts to target consumer tastes and desires become observable as disturbing or unsuccessful, and it is these failures that are of particular interest in terms of the intimacy of surveillance. As other scholars have argued, a focus on failures and breakages rather than novelty and innovation is a fruitful starting point for thinking through the use and effects of digital technology (see Jackson 2014, Pink *et al.* 2018). We follow the failures of online marketing with the intent of underlining how the limitations of algorithm-driven ad buying and targeting are experienced. Skeggs and Yuill (2016) demonstrate that Facebook’s algorithm is best at identifying ‘attention-worthy’ content for highly connected users who are part of an influential network, while for the less connected users the key words used for placing advertisements might be completely off target. By examining incidents when marketing fails to match products and consumers in a satisfying manner, and the negative emotional reactions that are triggered, we cast light on the intimate aspects of consumption-oriented corporate surveillance, and reflect on what they suggest in terms of consumers, marketing, and future research.

The intimacy of surveillance

The concept of ‘intimate surveillance’ refers to the scrutiny of children and young people by parents, caretakers, and friends (Leaver 2015), or technologically enabled control of women by their husbands (Hannaford 2015). This focus has led to interest in the normalization of surveillance as care (Leaver 2017) and suggestions that parental monitoring of babies and infants contributes to a surveillance culture wherein choosing *not* to survey can be read as a failure of good parenting. Rather than on the intra- or interpersonal dynamics of intimacy, however, the exploration promoted in this paper focuses on the intimacy of surveillance within the consumer-corporate relationship, arguing that the latter is also an important site of intimacy. As Jamieson (2011) notes in her historicization of the concept, intimacy refers ‘to the quality of close connection between people and the process of building this.’

By promoting the notion of the intimacy of surveillance, we build on the work of Moore (1999, p. 16, 2004), arguing for the usefulness of concept-metaphors to open up spaces within which truths, specifics, connections, and relationships can be presented and imagined. As a concept-metaphor, the intimacy of surveillance is defined in practice and in context; thus it is not a foundational concept, but a partial and perspectival framing device for exploring the surveillance aspects of contemporary corporate marketing. The intimacy of surveillance, when defined as a concept-metaphor, sensitizes us to the less stable and more ambivalent aspects of contemporary surveillance, facilitating the interrogation of practices that are seen as either supporting or violating personal autonomy and self-understandings. This kind of framing sheds light on where, how, and when corporate

surveillance begins to threaten personal autonomy and is felt as intrusive, scary, or creepy (Lupton and Michael 2017, p. 267).

When intimacy is defined as a spatial concept, it is useful to focus on the boundaries: How does corporate marketing and related surveillance violate the consumer-corporate relationship by infringing on notions of personal autonomy? As we demonstrate, the boundary crossings become visible as emotional responses: people feel angry when Facebook monetizes their personal data (Skeggs and Yuill 2016, p. 387). They feel 'strange sensations' (Bucher 2017a, p. 35) when their actions are exposed to an outside surveiller: for instance, one visits a friend and immediately afterwards, that same friend appears on one's Facebook newsfeed. In order to identify where the corporate marketing fails in its object, the moments that highlight misalignments between data uses and consumer aims are of key importance: following them we start to see how and why people feel powerless (Andrejevic 2014). What are the situations that invoke fear and threaten personal autonomy online? What kinds of data uses generate data insecurities? On the other hand, however, it is equally important to attend to the consensual and positive aspects of corporate surveillance. As Lupton and Michael (2017) describe, the cultural imaginary of surveillance celebrates intimate and intrusive forms of surveillance. Consumers also want to be intimately seen, known, and understood, which suggests that they embrace surveillance that is convenient and entertaining and digs deep into their social world (Ellerbrok 2011; Albrechtslund and Lauritsen 2013). From this perspective we ask: When does corporate marketing promote closeness and intimacy in the consumer-corporate relationship in a manner that makes surveillance tolerable or even stimulating and fun? Before introducing the empirical study, we outline the context for the targeted advertisement encounters that we explore, highlighting recent developments in the marketing field.

Marketing failures

The history of advertising makes it apparent that it has been seen as a necessary means of encouraging consumption by creating demands and new markets (Dyer 1982). Over time, brokers of goods and services developed a number of scientific techniques to manipulate desires, tastes, consumption decisions and purchases through advertising. The digital era is significantly increasing advertising and the use of data for sales purposes; online advertising space is expanding and much of this expansion is propelled by social media, the locus of the advertising discussed in this study. The advertising industry operates with the idea that as technology, software, and algorithms develop, the targeting of advertisements and content are becoming more sophisticated and effective (McStay 2016).

While commercial content and marketing messages have developed into an inescapable part of the digital media environment, marketers are also struggling with the weakening effects of traditional advertising. As Fourcade and Healy (2017, p. 23) describe, the old classifier of targeted advertising remains outside of the consumer's lifeworld, 'looking in': advertising is based on guessing likes and needs based on general information, such as gender and age. Instead, the new classifier seeks to position itself inside consumers' lifeworlds, not remaining at the margins but entering the everyday, scouting and browsing it: 'the market sees you from within, measuring your body and emotional states, and watching as you move around your house, the office, or the mall' (Fourcade and Healy 2017, p. 23). Becoming a new classifier means abandoning the traditional advertising model, even highly targeted advertisements, in favor of one where consumers are more dynamically classified: 'The new idea is a personalized presence that is so embedded in daily routines that it becomes second nature' (Fourcade and Healy 2017, p. 23). In the advertising field, personalization translates into a heightened interest in automatic and involuntary consumer responses, emotional reactions and behavioral clues that are seen to 'bypass cognition' (McStay 2016, p. 4).

Despite the recognition that traditional advertising might not be effective in the social media environment, a lot of the everyday marketing that people encounter is still based on traditional advertising principles. Thus, the context of the advertising discussed in this study is one in which, online, the so-called traditional advertising model is under pressure from two sides, the market

and the consumer, both expecting improvements. Within this context, we can explore how the traditional advertising model and the move away from that model is experienced by focusing on how consumers feel about market agents that follow their actions in real time and proactively suggest actions and choices likely to be of interest to them. Online platforms and device-makers rely on algorithm-driven logics to distribute targeted advertisements. In social media platforms, the ads are physically placed either on the sidebar, or within the newsfeed of the service; in the latter case, the ads are mixed with user-generated content. Machine-led targeting is supposed to support advertising goals, to seduce and manipulate in subtle ways that inspire and generate consumer desires and needs. Yet ads are also seen as completely irrelevant. Online marketing is frequently not appreciated or reacted to; it is merely digital noise or waste. Reuters Report notes that up to fifty percent of users install ad-blocking software on their devices and actively avoid sites where ads interfere with the content (Austin and Newman 2015). Participants in our study talk of blocking and actively ignoring advertisements. ‘Facebook ads are a Turkish bazaar that I try to avoid,’ as one of them put it.

By paying attention to online advertisements that trigger emotional responses, we can explore what distinguishes those advertisements or advertisement types from the usual flow of ads to the degree that people remember them and want to share their experiences. We follow ‘the remembered’ with the idea that advertising that is recounted in interview situations operates as a fruitful entry point for thinking about the intimacy of surveillance. After presenting our empirical material we discuss what the findings of our study suggest in terms of the consumer-market relationship. We situate the findings within the framework of a recognized shift away from traditional advertising towards so-called ‘post-marketing’ (Zwick 2017) that attempts to respond to marketing failures by enhancing the intimacy of surveillance: the relationship between marketing, the self, and the everyday. In the post-marketing era, Zwick (2017) argues, marketing is not just recording, analyzing, and targeting; rather, it wants to become ‘biopolitical,’ a force that celebrates the productive value of life itself (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016, p. 95). This form of marketing is characterized by the interpenetration of the cultural and the economic that rejects ‘any clear distinction between marketing and consumer’ (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016, p. 93). We argue that it is important to acknowledge that online marketing might be more likely to please consumers when it feels like post-marketing: the marketing efforts do not stand out, but are personalized in an inconspicuous manner, anticipating ‘needs, desires, and plans before they are fully formed’ (Fourcade and Healy 2017, p. 23). Our ambition here, however, is not to promote or celebrate post-marketing as the future of marketing, but to see it as an integral part of the consumer-market relationship that should be a subject of analysis.

The emotional as a methodological entry point

Inspired by the work of Bucher (2017a), focusing on the ‘algorithmic imagination’ as a way of thinking about how algorithmic systems are imagined and experienced, and the kind of imaginaries they enable and promote, our aim was to add to the scholarly work on how algorithms are experienced. The second author conducted semi-structured interviews in Helsinki, Finland, between June and August of 2017 that also offered time for the interviewees to discuss their feelings and observations concerning algorithmic systems. The interviews were conducted in people’s homes, cafes, or at the University, depending on what the research participants felt comfortable with. Initially, we used social media channels for recruitment, leading to snowball sampling beyond online networks. Overall, we had 25 research participants, 14 women and 11 men between the ages of 19 and 56; educational backgrounds ranged from primary school to a doctoral degree. The interviewees included students in various fields, a chef, an unemployed person, a lifestyle hippie, a post-doctoral researcher, a photographer, a radiographer, a practical nurse, a nutritionist, an internet marketer, and the product marketing manager of a security service.

Based on the empirical data, the term algorithm works well as a conversation opener. Much like Bucher’s (2017a) research participants, ours did not know how Facebook’s or Google’s proprietary

algorithms operate, but they clearly recognized the workings of algorithms online. All those who agreed to the interview knew or thought they knew what algorithms are. When algorithms are publicly discussed, the attention tends to focus on newsworthy revelations. In contrast, the everyday workings of algorithms are mostly observed alone, with associated feelings of astonishment or distress, particularly when their operating principles are not understood (Bucher 2017b). Seaver (2017) discusses the terminological confusion and anxiety around the algorithm: the term has drifted out of computer science into popular discourse where it might refer to either a new kind of cultural phenomenon or authority or a symbol of unwanted forces in the digital world (Gillespie 2016). Everyday understandings of algorithms are shaped by what is taught at school and discussed with friends or in the media; the interviewees were, for example, well-versed in terms of surveillance and privacy threats. The role of algorithms in political processes and the threat they pose for democratic decision-making and elections in the form of ‘social media bubbles’ and algorithmic biases were also discussed in detail, while future-oriented talk focused on the developing technical capacities and potentials of machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Interestingly, however, the interview material highlighted one unremarkable way in which algorithms become a part of everyday knowledge and experiences. Forms of social categorization exercised through algorithmic systems become ‘known’ and ‘felt’ through online marketing on social media sites. Yet the fact that targeted advertisements are one of the main ways by which people acquire firsthand knowledge about the workings of algorithms seemed such a banal finding that at first we ignored it. As we kept reading the interview transcripts, however, and arranging the material thematically, it became obvious that targeted advertisements constitute an opportunity to explore the intimacy of surveillance by way of emotional reactions to the workings of algorithms. Bucher (2017a, p. 35) talks about ‘the intimate powers of algorithms,’ and when we noted that the failures of machine-led marketing become a subject of critical commentary, we started seeing a pattern in how ads are understood to offer suggestions and evoke desires that do not align with personal aspirations and aims; this suggests that emotional reactions to ads, or at least how such reactions are shared in interviews, could operate as a fruitful methodological entry point for exploring how corporate marketing becomes an intrusion.

We follow the lead of Kennedy and Hill (2017) by treating narrated emotional reactions as a methodological aid in exploring everyday knowledge and experience. They situate reactions to data visualizations within the context of the sociology of emotions (Hochschild 2002, Bericat 2016), underlining the epistemological value of emotions in knowledge formation and the need to take emotions seriously in the analysis of social structures and arrangements. By tracing emotional reactions, we could separate between three divergent emotional realms in our material – fear, irritation, and pleasure – that open a discursive vista into ways marketing promotes or fails to promote closeness and intimacy in the consumer-corporate relationship. Emotional reactions to targeted advertisements are not only about the advertisements; rather, the emotional extends to discontents and pleasures connected with datafication, surveillance, market aims, identity pursuits, gender stereotypes, and self-understandings. By triggering similar responses, emotional reactions to ads reveal organizing principles shared by people of different backgrounds. Of course, as is typical of qualitative research, the findings of this study are limited to what our empirical material tells us. Yet the aspects of targeted advertising that the narrated emotional reactions expose are familiar to social media users; in that sense they are not remarkable or surprising in any way. When brought together, the narrated emotional reactions are not simply individual reactions; rather, they tell a more generalizable story of corporate surveillance’s violation of notions of personal autonomy and privacy. Alternatively, when the line is not crossed, corporate surveillance may be seen as tolerable or even stimulating and entertaining. As Kennedy and Hill (2017, p. 12) argue, the emotional operates as an ‘epistemic resource,’ pointing towards the most important components for understanding what moves, annoys, or energizes people in terms of data uses and algorithms.

In light of our empirical material, the emotional reactions illustrate a situational field of positioning in terms of corporate marketing and surveillance. The emotional range of dataveillance is deeply

ambivalent, explaining how the same person that criticizes the Big Brother logic of the corporation is pleasantly surprised by an advertisement that appears to inform her of exactly the right product. The fearful reactions are triggered by online targeted advertising that mimics the user's past behavior, thereby generating unpleasant sensations of being surveilled. From this perspective, corporate consumer surveillance appears as disturbance, a feeling of being followed, that somebody is peering over your shoulder. These experiences of surveillance align with the critical debate that focuses on how data tracking by corporations undermines personal autonomy and privacy.

The second area of emotional reactions, narrated as nuisance and irritation, are triggered by the machine logic of the ads that are shown. Interviewees complained that the ads operate in too general and mechanical a manner, relying on age-gender-location-based categories. Instead of subtly guiding consumers, classification schemes become visible as crude sorting mechanisms: young women complain that they are continually informed about beauty products and pregnancy tests; young men are targeted by dating sites and claims of 'hot singles near you.' Here the irritation with targeted advertisements is not directed at the dataveillance per se but, rather, at algorithmic operations, decisions, and choices that appear too rigid and rule-bound.

Finally, in contrast with the more negative responses, the third area of emotional reactions, the neutral and pleasurable, applies when algorithms operate the way people want, pleasantly surprising with recommendations of music, or movies. Overall, the pleasurable aspects of targeted advertisement were talked about in the interviews much less than negative reactions; possibly, people take the pleasurable aspects for granted, or think that they are too apparent or light-hearted to be discussed in a research interview. As Fourcade and Healy (2017, p. 17) suggest when consumer data traces and corporate goals align successfully, the work of the market is naturalized. The positive reactions that were shared, however, reveal how important the pleasurable experiences are in terms of understanding the intimacy of surveillance. We discuss the three areas in a more detailed manner in order to demonstrate their specific features; in people's talk, however, they are all aspects of the same dataveillance phenomenon.

Violating the intimacy of surveillance

In terms of felt violations of intimacy, fear is the emotional reaction that interviewees refer to most. Those interviewees who did not share fearful reactions in terms of dataveillance, held it unlikely that their information would be misused. As one of the women explained: 'Admittedly, I do watch cat videos for close to two hours a day, which does say something about the quality of my life and the fact that I should get a life and so on.' At the same time, she emphasized that she has nothing to hide and hence, no reason to be afraid. Another young woman explained that personally she is not bothered by data capture, but she does feel anxious about its societal expansion. Typically, fears are related to misuse of information, hacking, and identity thefts. As Lupton and Michael (2017) demonstrate, it might not be the data-gathering itself that bothers people, but, rather, damaging data movements and uses, particularly those that are not company-initiated: frauds and scams that violate both the consumer and the market. As one of their informants puts it: 'it depends on who's got the data.' The most pervasive fear reported by our interviewees, however, relates to the uncertainty about what and how much information is collected and what it is used for. They acknowledge that they have no way of knowing what is going on in terms of dataveillance: the corporate machinery operates like an intruder and a stalker, following people across online services like a shadow.

In the interviews, people described becoming exposed in unpleasant ways to the knowledge of algorithms through cookies and targeted advertising. For instance, a practical nurse in her fifties recounted that she had been thinking of buying a new cell phone and had compared phones on the website of a chain store. As soon as she closed the site, she could see the same phones appearing in her Facebook feed, something she found irritating, even a bit scary. She felt that her personal space was being invaded and that she could not find peace online. A similar example was given by a man in his thirties, who talked about how, after buying flight tickets, advertisements offer hotels to the same

destination. He called them ‘wait a minute moments’ that feel ‘potentially dangerous.’ The violation that these experiences speak of has to do with the awareness of ‘being found’ (Bucher 2017a, p. 35). They are everyday situations that offer glimpses of how the corporate surveillance machinery works.

Even if data analytics are not identifying certain individuals, but categorizing and classifying consumers and offering them marketing based on those classifications, the ads feel personally invasive. One of the research participants pondered how consumable things just appear on the screen. She says that the aptness of algorithms is scary at times. ‘Do they know me completely?’ she asks. The interviewees talk about situations that have startled them, or made them feel fearful and insecure, adding to a sense of paranoia about their safety online. Typically, these stories involve strange coincidences: one writes a Facebook update about a daughter’s broken ankle and the next day there is a phone call from an insurance company offering accident insurance. The stories told reiterate how people suspect that their cell phones are tapped, private messages read, and their behavior and locations trailed. The way people discuss corporate surveillance underlines ad targeting as a public concern: people have no control over the data trails they leave behind and how they are taken advantage of. The sense of personal violation is intensified because of the impossibility of knowing how information is collected, who uses it, and for what purposes. In light of the concept-metaphor of the intimacy of surveillance, the moments of corporate surveillance that generate distress demonstrate how the sense of intimacy is injured or lost in the corporate-consumer relationship. If the new intimacy of surveillance is built on its acceptance and the closeness between the market and the consumer, corporate surveillance to which our research participants react negatively violates this social contract.

The market fails to see me

According to the participants of our study, targeted advertising is typically seen as superior to non-targeted, but it still tends to irritate social media users. One of them observed how, at first, he would press ‘not a legal ad’ to every advertisement offered. Then he started thinking that he should not block them all so as to receive more enjoyable examples ‘than diaper ads,’ which annoyed him because he had no intention of having anything to do with babies in the near future. Irritation and nuisance follow the workings of algorithms: the interviewees repeatedly commented on how annoyed they were with the way they were categorized, emphasizing that statistically calculated groups and identities might be in conflict with how users of online services feel about and see themselves. One of the younger women complained that being shown pregnancy test ads because of her demographic profile irritates her, because she would like to ‘continue to live a wild youth, but society is deciding that it is time to settle down.’ She sees ads reflecting normative values that the algorithms are merely replicating; consequently she is ‘known’ as being of child-rearing age and encounters pictures of babies everywhere.

The algorithm-driven advertising that follows the grouping logic triggers annoyance because the user is treated as a caricature and allocated an algorithmic identity based on one or two easily legible characteristics, typically gender and age (Cheney-Lippold 2011). She would be interested in technology, one of the interviewees explained, but the ads she gets only feature ‘women’s technology,’ hair curlers and driers. Even if it is logical, following well-known gender stereotypes, to target a woman over forty with wrinkle cream ads, the participants of our study resisted this idea. Mostly women, but also some men, talked about how boring or infuriating it is that marketing is based on gender stereotypes, a reminder that the way people read advertisements reflects the larger values of local society: in Finland, a country with an established history of politics of gender equality (Holli 2003), women criticize gender stereotypes and this criticism extends to machine logics replicating those stereotypes. Here, you could even argue that the machine is in conflict with society, suggesting that people are very ready to probe machine logic if it limits or distorts their self-understandings. They might not be able to work against algorithms, or design better ones, but at least they feel strongly that the machine is not reading them right.

Thus, in light of the intimacy of surveillance, ads irritate and feel dysfunctional because the digitally constructed categories of identity feel too crude, with the market failing to appreciate the many ways in which people pursue identities. For the shared irritation felt about consumer grouping extends to a more general critique of the machine not seeing ‘me.’ A vegetarian might be offered meat dishes; a meat lover is targeted with a vegan cookbook. Failures of marketing are also felt in the form of a temporal lag: consumers are bombarded with ads for flights that are already bought and hotel rooms already booked. As one of the women complained, she gets ads for things she owns and not for things that she could buy. When targeted ads are not apt or relevant, they reflect life already lived and experiences already had. ‘Algorithms reckon wrong,’ as one of the interviewees put it, emphasizing that the ads fail to anticipate needs or desires and replicate steps already taken. Here, the interviewees did not complain about corporate marketing because of violations of their personal autonomy or privacy. Instead, they talked about the discrepancy between the advertising machine and their lifeworld: in terms of their life, the machine is too slow and out of sync. They would prefer the machine generated targeting to be more precise and personalized, agile and real-time, remaining ahead of them and predicting and anticipating where they are heading.

Pleasurable encounters with the market

The pleasurable aspects of targeted advertisement are linked to successful processing of information. Advertisement can trigger a pleasurable feeling of recognition: the machine really knows me. When the classification work of the company feels successful, people talk about advertisements being timely and suitably personalized. A woman in her twenties talked about how she prefers aesthetically pleasing ads, clothes rather than sausages; sausages belong to a world that she wants to keep out of her social media. Successfully targeted ads market things that people want to see and that they could or will buy. A chef in her thirties was critical about cookies and corporate surveillance, but she enjoys ‘apt’ ads. She gave as an example a top and a t-shirt that she had bought after perfectly targeted marketing, because they had exactly the right slogans for her. They were pieces of clothing that she ‘had to get’ and despite problems with corporate surveillance, these purchases do not bother her in any way.

A research participant who generally enjoys algorithmic recommendations talked about how market manipulation can become ‘overly aggressive,’ a reminder of the balance needed to maintain the intimacy of surveillance. A part time student / concierge enjoyed relevant ads, but also mentioned the risk of advertisements being *too* apt, arguing that it is a good thing that marketing is ‘irrational’: the less relevant the ads are, the more protected she is from desiring unneeded things. Marketing experiences are engendered within the larger context of corporate marketing, which is always potentially harmful in terms of privacy and personal autonomy and always potentially pleasurable in terms of needs and desires.

For the five interviewees who had experience of self-initiated marketing online, satisfying encounters with the market extended to how they themselves had employed marketing techniques. Social media marketing gives ordinary people the tools to set up their own marketing campaigns; they can select where to post their ads and follow responses to them by way of data analytics. The more consumers learn about online marketing, the more they can also behave like marketers (Abidin 2017). Digital forms of marketing, characterized by the interpenetration of the cultural and the economic, blur the boundaries between consumer and marketing, while marketing also promotes new consumer practices. Online, users are both producers and consumers of content, harnessing emotional energies to communicating things that are relevant for them.

Less and more surveillance

We have developed the notion of the intimacy of surveillance to study where, how, and when the line is drawn beyond which corporate surveillance becomes too creepy and intrusive. We identified three emotional responses to corporate marketing, each revealing recurrent features of the consumer-

corporate relationship. Not surprisingly, consumers have genuine concerns about the collection and use of personal information; the powerlessness that people feel about corporate surveillance is well documented, and concerns over personal data exploitation are not diminishing (Andrejevic 2014). On the contrary, with the regular advent of new revelations about the extent of online surveillance and consumer manipulation, consumers become even more concerned. Indeed, surveillance can occur whether one actively uses social media services or not (Skeggs and Yuill 2016). Facebook infamously revealed that it keeps shadow profiles of people who have never signed up to the service. With layers of facial recognition being applied by social media platforms, simply being in a photograph, even if no tags or personal identifications are added, can be enough to leave a trail on a company database.

Within the culture of surveillance, it is easy to agree with interviewees who talk about our no longer being free or becoming slaves of the data giants (Andrejevic 2014, p. 1685). Yet consumers also tend to ignore and downplay losses of personal autonomy and privacy. The aim of advertisers is to be present in consumers' daily lives in ways that feel relevant and meaningful, and this is what the users of online sites might also be after: they talk about ads not reflecting their needs and interests, indirectly expressing a desire not for less, but for more, targeted advertising. Exploring the intimacy of surveillance suggests that consumers might criticize advertising that does not assist them personally to find objects and aims related to their lives; they do not want advertising that fails to touch them. From this perspective, consumers clearly want contradictory things: they oppose ad targeting based on tracking their activities and demographic profiles, but also want more real-time analysis and better probabilistic predictions. The pleasurable encounters with marketing, exemplified by the successful alignment of advertisements and pursued identities, are of key importance in terms of the intimacy of surveillance. Zwick (2017) discusses 'the affect of relevance' triggered by the pleasure of being seen by the market and of being unobtrusively guided and manipulated. Importantly, the affect of relevance overrides concerns about privacy and marketing manipulation; it is at the heart of the new intimacy of surveillance. As Leaver argues (2017, p. 4), the 'emotional impact is more effective than the relationship with more recognizable forms of knowledge.' When marketing is felt as relevant, consumers feel less reluctance in giving in and following marketing messages. They fail to see or feel that personal autonomy is being manipulated, or personal space invaded.

Our study underlines the importance of not letting the tension and ambivalence between the experienced positive and negative aspects of digital marketing to fade into the background when seeking to understand dataveillance: it explains how corporate surveillance that is disturbing and unpleasant can co-exist with pleasurable moments of being 'seen.' The contradictory aspects of surveillance call for more research on the affective aspects of the intimacy of surveillance, which attends to how the affective becomes a key element in the process of normalization and intensification of surveillance (Leaver 2017, p. 3). We suggest that a fruitful direction in which to open discussion with research participants is how felt personal autonomy and liberty intertwine with the ways different kinds of consumers are sorted and classified by machinic agencies. This connects to the study of how machine classifications are perceived: whether people think that they have been appropriately recognized by algorithmic systems or simply offered a rerun of the past or caricatures and stereotypes that reveal how little the machines understand us despite all the talk about their classificatory powers.

Towards post-marketing

We have argued for the usefulness of focusing on failures of automated targeted advertising, exemplified by how crude machine logics disturb consumers online. The failures resonate with the prediction that 'the age of generic and even 'niche' marketing is slowly coming to an end' (Fourcade and Healy 2017, p. 23). Our study suggests that online marketing pleases consumers more when it feels like post-marketing. Replicating the logic of dataveillance, marketing becomes 'deeply inserted into, and increasingly indistinguishable from, the fabric of everyday life,' as Zwick and Bradshaw (2016, p. 93) argue. As we have observed above, corporate marketing disturbs when ads feel too

invasive and aggressive, triggering evaluations of whether the marketing is relevant. The remembered failures of marketing, when advertisements have been regarded as neither interesting nor seductive, demonstrate misalignments and moments of disillusionment associated with machine-led, human-technology interactions. In response to such misalignments, biopolitical or post-marketing calls for ways the market can 'make life' and better anticipate and parasitically latch onto consumer needs and desires (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016). One way of doing this is to engage proactive machines, such as recommendation engines, in the marketing work in order to promote consumer needs and desires that are embedded in everyday aims.

Based on the empirical material, the move towards post-marketing is awaited by those consumers who wish that the market would perform better in terms of anticipating and molding their needs and desires. The positive responses to marketing messages promoting relevant means for identity work and identification, for instance in the form of a slogan t-shirt, are evidence that corporate surveillance is gradually preparing us for more intimate surveillance. The emotional reactions uncovered by focusing on the algorithmic imaginary suggest the longing for passive metrics to become more active, offering personalized and proactive action and variety, surprises, and suggestions beyond stereotypes. The risks and harms of everyday surveillance are evident to consumers, but the promise of commodifying life without consumer-corporation antagonism is seductive (Zwick and Bradshaw 2016, p. 96).

Concluding remarks

Post-marketing is a vision or a professional utopia that is highly unlikely to materialize fully in the digital marketing world. The reality that consumers are facing online is that even if they were ready for new visions of marketing, targeted advertisements continue to hit and miss their lifeworlds. As a related development, proactive machines, in the form of search engines and recommendation systems, have started to behave like marketing devices. Biopolitical forms of marketing are also being promoted by consumers themselves. Marketing takes place beyond the advertising and marketing profession; online we can all become everyday marketers, promoting ourselves and our causes as 'influencers' (Abidin 2017). The market is teaching us to see ourselves not only as data-generating subjects for the corporate surveillance machinery, but also as everyday marketers, capable of segmenting and shaping the world with our own targeted ads.

When targeted ads become part of online experiences, they are not merely offering purchasing suggestions, but are transformed into shaping forces in how people see themselves, others, and their online environment. This is what the participants of our study were also indicating when they discussed the sociotechnical realities of which algorithmic systems are part. The lack of knowledge about how their personal data traces are tampered with is distressing, making the desire for a more algorithm-aware society understandable. The current situation in which people are trying to comprehend, typically alone with their devices, what is going on in terms of continuously changing algorithmic systems, is clearly undermining public culture. This calls for collective responses to the shared pleasures and pains of living alongside algorithms. The way forward suggested in this paper takes seriously emotional reactions in terms of data-veillance and uses them as evidence of recurring failures. The everyday distress and paranoia to which users of social media are exposed are indicators of failed social arrangements in need of urgent repair.

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