Governing by Algorithm and AI Driven Design: Online Choice Architecture, Hypernudging, and Algorithmic Governmentality

George Kutty James
Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry, India

Dr. S. Indira
Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry, India

Abstract

The evolution of algorithmic systems in social media, search engines and e-commerce sites has resulted in a shift in the conditions under where individuals make decisions. These systems operate by subtly shaping the environments of choice through *online choice architecture* and *dark patterns*. This paper analyses these mechanisms through Michel Foucault's theory of governmentality and its contemporary accounts of *algorithmic governmentality* and *hypernudging*. Empirical studies, including large-scale field experiments as well as evidence on the prevalence of manipulative consent banners and ranking effects demonstrate that these techniques exert measurable influence at the population scale. This paper argues that these mechanisms form a *conduct of conduct*. This results in the self-regulation of attention, choice and behaviour by the individual. Finally, the paper concludes by theorising an operational criterion for ethical online choice architecture.

Keywords

Online Choice Architecture, Dark Patterns, Hypernudging, Algorithmic Governmentality, Personalisation Systems, Digital Manipulation, Autonomy.