

Airplane Mode:
Design and Disillusionment in the Attention Economy

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Abstract

The digital age has revolutionized nearly every aspect of contemporary life, fundamentally altering how we communicate, work, learn, and socialize. The infiltration of new digital technologies such as smartphones, the expansion of mobile internet, and the ubiquity of social media platforms have created the perfect breeding ground for the consolidation of the attention economy — a system in which attention becomes the primary resource to be profited from. Hyperconnectivity and digital dependency reconfigure human behavior, shaping our perception of time and altering our priorities. This dissertation explores the intersection between art, design, and the attention economy, and how digital platforms influence modes of production and self-presentation. After examining the causes of our contemporary condition, I offer insights from artists and authors which point out to an intentional use of time and attention, suggesting an intentional use of those resources as a critical resistance towards the attention economy. Finally, I detail my own artistic practice, which considers the subjective dimensions of hyperconnectivity, with a special focus on typographic design and textual expressions within (and without) the digital realm.