Move Fast and Break Things

How Facebook, Google, and Amazon Cornered Culture and Undermined Democracy

Janson Duong & Kirin Kapoor



"'If you control the menu, you control the choices.' We cede our freedom to choose by giving networks like Google and Facebook control of the menu. How the mysterious black-box algorithms of Google, Facebook, and Amazon determine the menu can never be known by anyone outside those companies."

Jonathan Taplin

"My dear fellow, who will let you?"

"That's not the point. The point is,

who will stop me?"

Ayn Rand, The Fountainhead

- Disruptor ethos spearheaded by Peter Thiel (PayPal, Palantir, Facebook)
- Famous Economist Milton Friedman: "there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to increase its profits."
- Sean Parker & Napster's decimation of the music industry in the 2000s

Corporate Power is Real



Google's response to the 2012 Stop Online Piracy Act

Stop TikTok Ban **J**TikTok Stop a TikTok shutdown Congress is planning a total ban of TikTok. Speak up now-before your government strips 170 million Americans of their Constitutional right to free expression. This will damage millions of businesses, destroy the livelihoods of countless creators across the country, and deny artists an audience. Let Congress know what TikTok means to you and tell them to vote NO. Enter your 5-digit zip code to find your representative **Call Now**

- TikTok praised Trump for "preventing" the company's American shutdown
- "Revolving door"
 interactions between
 Google and the U.S
 Government

- Amazon earns 51 cents of every dollar spent in online commerce
- Kindle acts upon consumers as a monopoly and book publishers as a monopsony
- Takes losses to kill off brick-and-mortar competitors



Ethical Theories and Tech Monopolies

Utilitarianism

Digital giants concentrate
wealth and power,
destroying other
businesses and hurting
consumers

Existentialism

Monopolies limit individual choice and freedom, both directly and indirectly

Kantianism

Treating consumers as products to be used for advertising

Contractualism

Reasonable rejection and the veil of ignorance: who would support such unequal power and corruption?

Takeaways

- "Technological progress has no inherent moral arc" - Jonathan Taplin
- Unchecked lobbying leads to stronger monopolies. That has overall net effect.
- Leaves less options for consumers and businesses



Are there socially safe ways for lobbying to exist?