

Original Research Article

# Governance-as-capability: How data-intensive platforms translate privacy and measurement demands into operating capabilities

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**Abstract:** Data-intensive platforms must grow revenue while meeting rising expectations on privacy, user choice, brand safety and measurement. We conduct a qualitative, multi-case longitudinal study of Netflix, Amazon and TikTok (2024–2025), drawing primarily on first-party official materials (Help/Policy/Legal, Transparency, IR, Dev/Spec). Using structured coding and temporal bracketing, we identify a recurring sequence: Platforms first reduce friction with user-facing options and thresholds, then align delivery, experimentation and attribution, and finally fold workable combinations into version-governed defaults with rollback. The paper offers a process account of governance-as-capability, an auditable comparison frame (C1 choice/transparency; C2 supply-side tiering and partner governance; C3 measurement/attribution), and design guidance—Predefined options, release discipline, and minimal interoperability anchors—That supports monetization under evolving privacy and disclosure requirements.

**Keywords:** governance-as-capability; data-intensive platforms; privacy

## 1. Introduction

Platforms increasingly combine subscriptions, advertising and transactions. Doing so at scale requires not only product and ad-tech integration but also credible governance of privacy, user choice, brand safety and measurement. Prior work explains how multi-sided platform design and business-model choices shape value creation and capture (Rochet & Tirole, 2003; Teece, 2010).

We address two questions. RQ1: How do data-intensive platforms convert governance requirements into callable capabilities embedded in product, delivery and measurement stacks? RQ2: Why do streaming, retail-media and short-video platforms realise these capabilities through different coupling points, and where do such arrangements tend to fail or require repair?

The analysis reveals a simple but reusable sequence. Platforms first make high-friction issues actionable with visible options and thresholds; next, they align delivery, experimentation and attribution so teams speak the same language and use consistent data paths; finally, they consolidate workable combinations into version-governed defaults with clear release cadence and rollback.

## 2. Literature review

The monetization of the platform is not to select a certain revenue line in isolation, but to design the system configuration of "who pays, who is subsidized, and under what participation rules." The two-sided market model shows that cross-side externalities, lateral elasticity and single and multi-homing modes jointly determine feasible price allocation (Rochet & Tirole, 2003). Competitive dynamics further determine whether the hybrid model can hold in the long run, or tilt to the single payment side when conditions change, such as multi-ownership to weaken the installed base advantage (Armstrong, 2006). Relevant research formalizes the positioning choices of "operating as a platform" and "integrating/reselling," which determine the fees/subsidies and participation constraints of each side, thus opening or limiting the combination space of "subscription + advertising" (Hagiu & Wright, 2015).

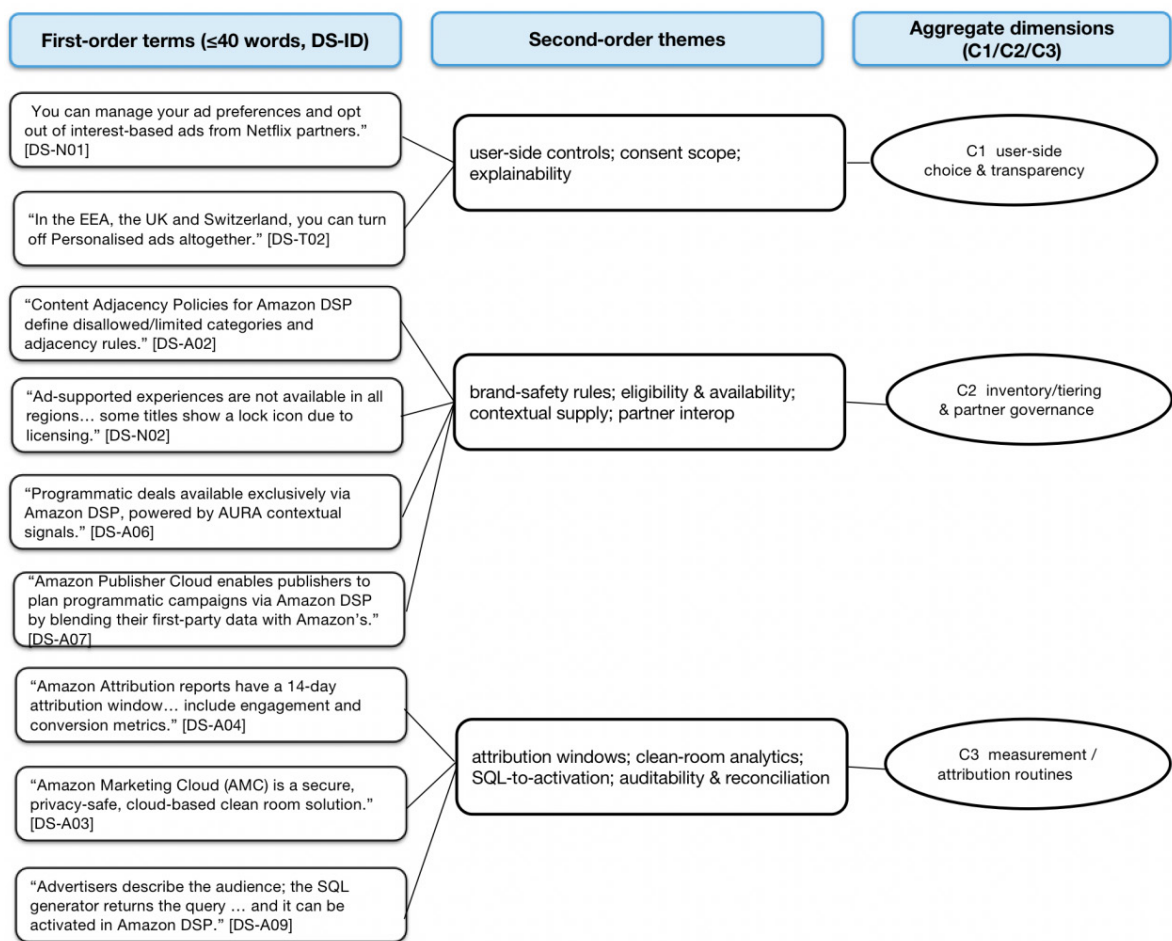
In general, platform economics defines monetization as a problem of system design - who pays, who is subsidized, and under what conditions of participation and accessibility - rather than single-point pricing, which lays the foundation for this paper to focus on where coupling occurs in different contexts in RQ2.

### 3. Research method

This study adopts qualitative multi-case design and longitudinal process analysis, and the materials are the official archives of Netflix, Amazon and TikTok. The goal is to identify: How the platform translates governance constraints into operational capabilities, and where these arrangements are coupled to the monetization path. The analysis process is bottom-up, from grounded coding to pattern comparison and time segmentation to maintain a traceable chain of evidence to claim (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013; Langley, 1999).

### 4. Finding

We coded the official materials on the platform side and the client side, and summarized three aggregation dimensions that run through the cross-case comparison: C1 user-side selection and transparency, C2 supply-side inventory/layering and partner governance, and C3 measurement/attribution routine. **Figure 1** presents verbatim first-order terms (with DS-ID), second-order topics and three aggregation dimensions.



Note: All quotes are ≤40 words and traceable by DS-ID in Appendix E. Full metadata appear in Appendix C.

**Figure 1.** (revised, arrowed). Gioia data structure—First-order (≤40w, DS-ID) → Second-order themes → Aggregate dimensions (C1/C2/C3).

#### 4.1. Generation logic: The cycle from matching to institutionalization

In Netflix, Amazon, and TikTok, we observe that instead of relying on one-off blueprinting, platforms repeatedly run a matching → core alignment → institutionalization cycle that transforms high-friction governance disagreements into callable, auditable units of capability. The cycle is driven by three pressures:

- (1) the inability of multiple actors to agree on an "acceptable threshold";
- (2) The advancement pace of internal lines (product, advertising, privacy, measurement) is not synchronized;

(3) The external environment changes in the form of discrete shocks (regulatory, ecological, competitive).

#### 4.2. Context comparison: Coupling sites and governance rhythms under different realization structures

Across the shared cycle of matching → core alignment → institutionalization, platforms do not converge to one template. They differ on (a) where coupling happens (which component plays the bonding role) and (b) when to advance/freeze/rollback. These differences follow each monetization logic (subscription–ads hybrid; first-party retail media; algorithmic short-video) and the mix of external constraints (privacy, brand-safety verification) and internal stack maturity.

| Dimensions                                                            | Netflix                                                                                                                                                | Amazon                                                                                                                                                      | TikTok                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dominant monetization (2024–2025)                                     | Hybrid: Subscription + Ads; selected live events (as applicable)                                                                                       | Retail media + e-commerce transactions; on-site search/display; off-site extension                                                                          | Advertising-led with creator/commerce integrations                                                                                                                   |
| Governance focus (privacy / ad-choices / brand safety / measurement)  | Help/Legal: Privacy Statement; Ads on Netflix; Terms of Use; Ad choices & targeting inputs; Brand suitability notes; Measurement/experimentation notes | Privacy Notice; Ads Guidelines & Acceptance; DSP Inventory & Content Adjacency policies; Approved 3P providers; Attribution & AMC measurement docs          | Global/EEA/UK Privacy; Ads & your data (personalized ads toggle, off-TikTok data control); Brand Safety & Suitability (Inventory Filter tiers); Transparency Reports |
| Internalization of capabilities (recommender / ad tech / measurement) | Mature recommender system; first-party ad platform roll-out (US Apr-2025, remaining ads countries 2025); experimentation/measurement stack             | Retail media platform (on-site search/display + off-site DSP); clean-room measurement (AMC); Amazon Attribution; partner-certified measurement/verification | Ranking/distribution system; Inventory Filter (Expanded/Standard/Limited); brand safety partners; measurement partners                                               |
| Primary official sources (type)                                       | Shareholder letters; Help/Legal pages; Terms; Privacy; Ads policy                                                                                      | Form 10-K/10-Q; Ads policy pages; Measurement/Attribution docs                                                                                              | Transparency center; Help/Legal; Ads policy; Privacy                                                                                                                 |

Figure 2. Cross-case comparison: Netflix vs. Amazon vs. TikTok.

#### 4.3. Robustness and scope conditions

Governance strength is non-monotonic: Guardrails stabilise supply but can compress reach. External cadence anchors show effects are measurable and time-bound—e.g., "adding 0.8 points from May to represent 8.3% of June's TV usage total ... the largest share since January 2025" [S-N07]. Read against eligibility/availability limits [DS-N02] and staged rollouts [DS-N04], this implies guardrails should move with a release cadence and rollback valve, implemented as freeze → release → reconcile → review, not simply tighten.

To prevent name-same, thing-different drift, attribution must be parameterised and versioned. Amazon discloses that "Amazon Attribution utilizes a 14-day, last-touch attribution model" and that reports "include engagement and conversion metrics" [DS-A04]. A versioned window + metric dictionary enables old–new mapping and sample reconciliations before defaults change (Ex. 5-4; Appendix E, DS-A04).

Claims of tagless verification or clean-room effects must be externally contestable. Amazon supports "ad verification ... via server-to-server (S2S) integrations" on DSP [DS-A05]; "TikTok's partner expansion frames trusted third-party measurement via the Open Measurement SDK." [S-T11]. On activation, "Build custom audiences in AMC using SQL ... and activate ... in Amazon DSP" [DS-A09] makes the compute chain replayable. Together with a minimum interoperable unit (MIU)—A schema-versioned field set and mappings(MIU = a schema-versioned field set and mapping table required before default inclusion)—These anchors keep the loop reproducible across stacks.

Regulatory shocks expose interpretability gaps and force default hardening. A Dutch DPA report noted Netflix "did not give customers sufficient information ... [and] has since updated its privacy statement" [S-N06], tracing a repair path consistent with our cycle: surface scope (C1) → align processes/definitions (C2/C3) → version and publish (freeze → release → reconcile → review with dated change-logs and old–new mapping).

#### 4.4. Stability mechanisms and cross-case consolidation

To keep comparability under uncertainty, the cycle runs with built-in early-warnings, a minimal diagnostic, and a reversible repair playbook. Typical warning signs are:

- (1) C1 consent/opt-out shifts that change the available signal surface [DS-N01; DS-A01; DS-T02];
- (2) C2 reach falling faster than learning improves, adjacency filters expanding beyond plan, or lapsing partner badges [DS-A02; DS-T03]; and
- (3) C3 clean-room jobs reporting "unmapped fields," split tests that fail to converge, or third-party

sampling that cannot reproduce results [DS-A03; DS-T05; DS-T06]. The minimal diagnostic checks, in order: window & dictionary parity—"...14-day, last-touch ... include engagement and conversion metrics" [DS-A04]; MIU continuity—Schema-versioned fields and mappings (C2-C3); and external anchors—"Ad verification ... via server-to-server (S2S)" on DSP and valid badged measurement partners [DS-A05; DS-T03].

Operationally, we abstract a minimal "invariants kit." It comprises: (1) a time-invariant attribution window and metric dictionary [DS-A04]; (2) a schema-invariant MIU and mapping tables that bridge partners and activation paths [DS-A09]; (3) tagless, third-party checkpoints via S2S/OM-SDK to keep claims externally contestable [DS-A05; DS-T03]; and (4) a cadence-invariant release loop (freeze → release → reconcile → review). With these in place, teams can apply counterfactual discipline—e.g., A/A checks and holdout-style reconciliations in AMC [DS-A03] while split tests tune parameters without polluting baselines [DS-T05; DS-T06]. The kit bounds experimentation cost and prevents hysteresis: changes that fail dual-track thresholds remain quarantined in pilots, preserving intertemporal comparability for finance and brand stakeholders.

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