



The Industry of 'Trends' via Digital Platforms: A Study on Agenda-Setting Strategies and the Formation of Mental Images among the Algerian Audience

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Abstract:

This research examines the "Trend" phenomenon as a transformative force in the Algerian communicative agenda, deconstructing the shift from traditional gatekeeping to algorithmic determinism. Using a descriptive-analytical method, the study investigates the interplay between human influencers and machine learning in manufacturing digital virality.

The results reveal that the "Trend" has become a primary architect of social reality, serving as both a tool for popular accountability and a mechanism for strategic distraction. Findings show that "Trendjacking" has eroded journalistic ethics, necessitating critical digital literacy to navigate the algorithmic dictatorship and ensure national communicative sovereignty.

Keywords: *Algorithmic Determinism; Attention Economy; Digital Gatekeeping; Influencer Marketing; Public Agenda; Trendjacking.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary global communication ecosystem is undergoing a seismic shift driven by the rapid proliferation of social media platforms and the rise of algorithmic governance. At the heart of this transformation lies the phenomenon of the "Digital Trend"—a dynamic communicative force that has transcended its origins as a mere popularity metric to become a primary architect of public discourse. In the pre-digital era, the "Gatekeeping" function was the exclusive domain of traditional journalistic institutions, which curated reality and established the public agenda. However, the emergence of trending topics has decentralized this power, introducing a complex interplay between human agency and machine learning. This shift represents a transition from a linear, top-down dissemination of information to a multi-directional, viral model where "visibility" is often prioritized over "veracity," and "engagement" serves as the new hard currency of the attention economy.

In the specific context of the Algerian digital environment, the "Trend" has manifested as a dual-edged sword. On one hand, it has empowered the "Active Audience" to bypass traditional censorship and institutional lethargy, allowing marginalized social and economic grievances to ascend to the pinnacle of national conversation through coordinated hashtag activism. On the other hand, the Algerian digital space is increasingly susceptible to the "Algorithmic Dictatorship," where the pursuit of virality fosters a culture of sensationalism, "Clickbait Journalism," and the strategic distraction of the masses. The core problematic of this research, therefore, arises from the tension between this newfound digital agency and the systemic erosion of professional journalistic standards. As Algerian media institutions increasingly adopt "Trendjacking" strategies to remain relevant, they risk becoming mere conduits for algorithmic trends rather than independent analysts of social reality. This raises critical questions about the authenticity of the digital public sphere in Algeria: Is the "Trend" a genuine reflection of the Algerian street, or is it a manufactured product of influencer networks and hidden algorithmic biases?

To address these complexities, this study adopts a rigorous Descriptive-Analytical Method, supplemented by an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that merges Agenda-Setting Theory with the Attention Economy paradigm. The research moves beyond superficial descriptions of viral content to conduct a deep-level Content Analysis of specific trending events in Algeria, categorizing them by their social, political, and emotional drivers. By dissecting the "Communication Snowball" effect—from the initial post to the peak of viral reach—this study aims to uncover the hidden mechanics of influence. It seeks to identify the "Digital Gatekeepers"—be they human influencers, organized groups, or silent algorithms—that decide which narratives flourish and which are suppressed in the Algerian virtual landscape.

From this perspective, the following primary question arises :**To what extent does the "Trend" phenomenon function as a transformative mechanism in reshaping the Algerian communicative agenda, and who are the primary actors—human or algorithmic—that orchestrate the manufacturing of virality and the subsequent direction of public interest in the digital age?**

1- Conceptual and Technical Foundations of the "Trend":

1-1 The Semiotics and Communicative Essence of "Trends":

In the contemporary digital taxonomy, a "Trend" represents more than a mere statistical peak; it is a semiotic construct that signals a state of hyper-synchronized collective consciousness. Linguistically derived from the concept of "inclination" or "direction," the digital trend serves as a real-time barometer of the virtual public pulse. Unlike traditional media events, a trend is characterized by its "explosive temporality," where a specific topic or hashtag achieves a critical mass of visibility within a negligible

timeframe, effectively colonizing the digital public sphere and imposing its presence on the global and local agenda (Al-Arabi, 2023).

The fundamental distinction between a "Trend" and "Traditional News" lies in the source of legitimacy and the velocity of propagation. Traditional news relies on institutional credibility and editorial selection, whereas a trend is fueled by the mechanics of "Viral Propagation." This process is decentralized and organic, transforming a singular piece of content into a cultural phenomenon through the "Snowball Effect." As users share, comment, and remix content, they act as secondary distributors, amplifying the message far beyond its original geographical or social boundaries, thereby creating a borderless communicative wave (Hijab, 2022). Furthermore, a trend functions as a "Symbolic Magnet," attracting diverse digital communities into a singular, unified discussion. This intense concentration of "Collective Attention" creates a temporary social reality that traditional media institutions can no longer ignore. Consequently, the trend dictates the hierarchy of importance in the digital age, where the "Routinization of the Viral" has forced professional journalists to align their coverage with trending hashtags to remain relevant in an environment where popularity often precedes professional news value (Sadeq, 2022).

1-2. Algorithmic Determinism and the Mechanics of Virality:

Algorithms serve as the invisible architects and primary engines of the trending phenomenon. These complex mathematical structures are designed by social media platforms to analyze massive datasets of user behavior, identifying peak activity moments and interaction patterns. When the system detects a "Positive Feedback Loop"—a rapid increase in likes, shares, and comments—the algorithm prioritizes that specific content, granting it "Exponential Visibility." This technical intervention is what transforms a local interaction into a national or global trend, effectively acting as an automated, non-human gatekeeper (Bin Morsli, 2024).

The logic governing these technical filters is rooted in the "Economy of Instant Relevancy." Algorithms are programmed to prioritize "Immediacy" and "Emotional Resonance" over depth or factual complexity. Because the primary goal of the platform is to maximize user "dwell time," the system favors content that triggers high-arousal emotions such as outrage, awe, or humor. This algorithmic bias inadvertently marginalizes analytical and long-form content, creating a digital environment where sensationalism is systematically rewarded and deep discourse is buried under the sheer volume of high-velocity, consumable material (Salem, 2021).

Additionally, the role of "Filter Bubbles" and "Echo Chambers" must be considered within this technical framework. Algorithms do not present trends in a vacuum; they curate them based on historical user data. This means that a "Trend" may appear more dominant to a specific demographic than others, reinforcing existing biases and creating "Fragmented Trends." This technical personalization complicates the concept of a "Unified Public Opinion," as different segments of the Algerian digital society may be exposed to entirely different "Trending Agendas" simultaneously, driven by the platform's predictive modeling (Anderson, 2022).

1.3 The Sociology of Actors: From Human Influencers to Artificial Bots:

While algorithms provide the infrastructure, "Influencers" serve as the primary human catalysts of the trending process. These individuals possess significant "Social Capital" and massive follower bases, allowing them to act as the new "Digital Gatekeepers." In the Algerian context, an influencer can launch a hashtag or a challenge and turn it into a national conversation within minutes. Their power stems from "Parasocial Interaction"—the illusion of a personal relationship between the influencer

and the follower—which ensures a high degree of trust and a rapid, coordinated response from their audience (Quirad, 2023).

Finally, the emergence of "Non-Human Actors" or "Electronic Armies" (Bots) has introduced a darker dimension to trend manufacturing. These are automated accounts programmed to artificially inflate the interaction metrics of a specific hashtag, creating a "False Consensus." This "Astroturfing" technique is often used to manipulate public opinion or drown out authentic social grievances. In the struggle for digital dominance, the use of bots to "force" a trend has become a common tactic for political and commercial actors, requiring a high level of "Digital Literacy" from the general public to distinguish between genuine social movements and manufactured digital illusions (Abdul Hamid, 2022).

2- Trendjacking Strategies in Digital Media:

2-1 The Strategic Appropriation of "Trendjacking" in Media Coverage :

In the contemporary digital ecosystem, "Trendjacking" has evolved from a secondary marketing tactic into a primary editorial strategy for modern media organizations. This process involves the deliberate alignment of a media outlet's content with current "Trending" topics to capitalize on existing public momentum. By strategically "hijacking" a viral conversation, organizations can exponentially increase their reach and visibility without the high costs associated with traditional advertising. This creates a symbiotic, albeit precarious, relationship between the media and the fluctuating interests of the digital masses (Smith & Jones, 2023).

The widespread adoption of trendjacking has precipitated a significant shift in editorial standards, where the traditional value of "Journalistic Depth" is increasingly superseded by the demand for "Algorithmic Immediacy." Editors now prioritize stories that possess "Viral Potential" over those of substantive public interest. This has led to the emergence of "Optimized News," where headlines and lead paragraphs are meticulously crafted using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) keywords and trending hashtags. The primary objective is no longer just to inform, but to satisfy the specific algorithmic requirements of platforms like Google, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter) to ensure placement in the user's "Top News" feed (Miller, 2024).

Furthermore, this strategic shift has transformed the role of the modern journalist into a "Content Strategist" who must navigate the fine line between reporting and engagement-baiting. The pressure to remain relevant in a crowded digital marketplace means that media organizations often ignore critical but "low-trending" social issues in favor of trivial events that are currently dominating the social media landscape. This prioritization of "Engagement Metrics" (likes, shares, clicks) over informative value risks turning the newsroom into a mirror of popular trends rather than a source of independent social analysis (Sherif, 2022).

2-2 The Impact of the "Attention Economy" on Journalistic Rigor:

Under the paradigm of the "Attention Economy," human attention has become the most scarce and valuable resource, with "Trends" serving as the hard currency of this market. Media institutions are now in a frantic competition for the fragmented attention of users who are constantly bombarded with information. This competitive environment creates a "Race to the Bottom" in terms of quality, where the speed of publication becomes more important than the accuracy of the information provided. In this high-stakes race, the fear of missing a "Trending Window" often drives journalists to bypass traditional verification protocols (Anderson, 2022).

This obsession with speed and viral reach has led to the proliferation of "Clickbait Journalism." In this model, the primary function of a headline is not to summarize the story, but to trigger an "Information Gap" or an emotional reaction that compels the user to click. By utilizing sensationalist language, exaggerated claims, or

misleading imagery, media outlets artificially boost their interaction rates. While this may increase short-term traffic, it significantly erodes the "Moral Contract" between the journalist and the public, leading to a long-term decline in institutional trust and the devaluing of serious investigative work (Brown & Lee, 2021).

Moreover, the "Attention Economy" facilitates the rapid spread of disinformation and "Fake News." When media organizations prioritize "Trend-Response" over "Fact-Checking," they inadvertently become conduits for unverified claims and manipulated content that happens to be trending. Once a false narrative achieves "Viral Critical Mass," it becomes nearly impossible to correct, as the algorithm continues to push the popular (though false) version over the factual correction. This cycle highlights the systemic vulnerability of modern journalism when it becomes too dependent on the fluctuating tides of digital popularity (Sadeq, 2022).

2-3 Ethical Crises and Professional Challenges in the Digital Age:

The relentless pursuit of virality through trend-chasing poses severe ethical risks, most notably regarding the "Right to Privacy" and human dignity. Media outlets, in their haste to capitalize on a trending tragedy, often exploit personal suffering or private accidents without the consent of the individuals involved. The "Commercialization of Trauma"—where a person's private crisis becomes a public trend—represents a fundamental breach of journalistic ethics. In the digital age, the boundary between "Public Interest" and "Public Curiosity" has become dangerously blurred, with the latter often winning out due to its higher viral potential (Johnson, 2023).

Furthermore, by following trends that are fueled by polarization, hate speech, or digital bullying, media organizations risk becoming active participants in social conflict. When an outlet "rides a trend" that is rooted in a "Virtual Trial" or an online mob action, it lends institutional legitimacy to unverified accusations and social lynching. Instead of acting as a tool for public enlightenment and social cohesion, the media becomes a tool for amplification, feeding the "Outrage Cycle" to maintain high engagement levels, which ultimately destabilizes the social fabric (Azzi, 2022).

Finally, these professional challenges necessitate a radical re-evaluation of the "Social Responsibility" of the journalist in the digital era. The "Gatekeeping" role must be reclaimed from algorithms and redirected toward a "Values-Based" curation of information. Algerian media students and practitioners are particularly challenged to develop a "Critical Digital Literacy" that allows them to distinguish between a "Genuine Public Demand" and a "Manufactured Algorithmic Trend." Without a strong ethical framework, the future of journalism in the age of trends risks becoming a subservient branch of the entertainment industry, governed by likes rather than truth (Slimani, 2023).

3- Analytical Study of Trend Characteristics in the Algerian Digital Environment:

3-1 The Sociology of Viral Content and Its Classifications in Algeria:

The phenomenon of "Trends" in the Algerian digital space functions as a complex socio-technical mirror reflecting the shifting values and social transformations of the contemporary Algerian society. Unlike static social indicators, the digital trend is a dynamic construct that can be classified into several distinct categories based on its socio-political impact. "Identity Trends" frequently emerge during nationalistic milestones or international sporting events, acting as a digital catalyst for a unified sense of belonging. Simultaneously, "Social Demand Trends" have become a powerful tool for shifting local grievances from the geographical periphery to the center of national administrative attention, effectively bypassing traditional bureaucratic hurdles (Bin Zayed, 2023).

A defining characteristic of the Algerian digital public is the dominance of "Emotional Resonance" in the selection and propagation of trending content. Human-interest stories, individual crises, or tales of extreme communal solidarity achieve rates

of interaction and "Viral Velocity" that far exceed those of intellectual or scientific discourse. This collective emotional impulsivity explains the rapid success of digital fundraising or solidarity hashtags; however, it also leaves the Algerian public vulnerable to "Manufactured Trends." These are often artificial "outrage cycles" or commercial traps designed to exploit collective sentiment for profit or the strategic manipulation of public priorities (Thompson, 2022).

Furthermore, there is an encouraging emergence of "Civic and Awareness Trends" within the Algerian virtual sphere, such as organized beach clean-ups, blood donation drives, or tourism promotion campaigns. These trends indicate a growing maturity in the use of digital tools, where the "Trend" is transformed from a fleeting digital moment into a tangible "Field Action." The success of these initiatives confirms that the Algerian digital society has begun to move beyond superficial entertainment toward a stage of "Active Digital Citizenship," where the trend serves as a collective problem-solving mechanism that enhances social development and local agency (Delimi, 2021).

3-2 Key Actors in Directing the National Digital Agenda:

"Digital Influencers" have emerged in Algeria—particularly on platforms like TikTok and Instagram—as the new dominant actors exercising a form of "Algorithmic Gatekeeping" that operates outside the boundaries of traditional institutional oversight. By leveraging their massive symbolic capital and follower bases, these individuals now dictate "what is important" to a significant portion of the Algerian youth. This has created a parallel cultural space where the "Stardom of the Trend" often carries more weight than academic or professional expertise, leading to a profound shift in the social hierarchy of influence and the standards of success (Quirad, 2023).

A symbiotic and often controversial relationship has developed between these "Trend Makers" and private Algerian television channels, leading to a phenomenon known as the "Whitewashing of Digital Content." Channels frequently host individuals who have gained notoriety through sensationalist or shallow trends to secure higher viewership ratings and digital engagement. This strategic alliance grants "Institutional Legitimacy" to viral content that may lack informational or moral value, thereby confusing the public's perception of genuine social contribution versus mere viral fame. This integration of the "Virtual" into the "Mainstream" significantly extends the lifecycle of a trend and amplifies its societal impact (Garcia, 2023).

Additionally, "Major Virtual Groups" (primarily on Facebook) act as organized collective actors capable of engineering trends through coordinated action. These groups serve as digital "Command Centers" that can launch hashtags or "E-protests" to force specific issues onto the national agenda. This "Grassroots Trend Engineering" represents a formidable fifth power in Algeria, capable of influencing public policy and forcing official state institutions to respond to digital pressure. This highlights the transition of the trend from a silent algorithm into a vocal, organized tool for political and social lobbying (Williams & Davis, 2024).

3-3The Impact of "Trends" on National Public Opinion: Analysis and Interpretations

Empirical analysis suggests that the "Trend" in Algeria has evolved into a mechanism for "Digital Popular Oversight" (Accountability). Viral hashtags have been instrumental in exposing administrative corruption, highlighting institutional neglect, or demanding professional rights, which has forced official bodies to adopt more transparent communication strategies. This shift reflects the transformation of the Algerian citizen from a "Passive Consumer" of state media to an "Active Monitor" who utilizes the viral power of the trend to achieve immediate communicative and political results (Slimani, 2023).

Conversely, the Algerian digital space faces the significant threat of "Strategic Distraction." This occurs when a series of superficial, sensationalist, or controversial trends are manufactured to drown out serious economic or political discussions. This "Information Overload" leads to "Cognitive Exhaustion" among the public, making it difficult for the average citizen to maintain focus on long-term national goals. In this environment, the public often lives in a "Permanent Present," jumping from one viral wave to the next without the opportunity for deep reflection or the accumulation of meaningful knowledge (Roberts, 2021).

In conclusion, the "Authority of the Trend" in Algeria is a dual-edged sword. While it provides a democratic space for free expression and the breaking of information monopolies, it also imposes a form of "Algorithmic Dictatorship" that marginalizes intellectual elites in favor of the most sensational content. The future of communication in Algeria depends on the ability of the next generation of media students to develop "Critical Digital Literacy." This involves moving from simply reacting to trends to "Leading the Trend" with ethical responsibility, ensuring that this technical power is harnessed for the public good and the protection of the national identity (Sadeq, 2022).

4- Ethical and Legal Frameworks and the Future Prospects of the "Trend":

4-1 The Crisis of Professional Ethics Under "Algorithmic Dictatorship":

The phenomenon of the "Trend" has introduced a profound ethical crisis in the field of communication, characterized by a shift from the "Ethics of Responsibility" to the "Ethics of Virality." In this new paradigm, news value is increasingly measured by quantitative metrics such as Click-Through Rates (CTR) and engagement levels rather than the traditional standards of public utility or factual truth. This pressure to maintain a high digital presence often forces media practitioners to bypass rigorous "Fact-checking" protocols, turning digital platforms into fertile grounds for the propagation of "Misinformation Trends" designed to manipulate public sentiment for commercial or political gain (Anderson, 2022).

Furthermore, the pursuit of trending status frequently leads to the violation of the "Right to Privacy" and the devaluing of human dignity. In the Algerian digital landscape, the "Commercialization of Trauma" has become a disturbing trend, where personal tragedies, accidents, or private crises are transformed into viral content to satisfy public curiosity and boost interaction metrics. This practice bypasses the "Moral Contract" between the media and the public, often resulting in "Digital Character Assassination" or online mob trials that destroy individuals' reputations without due process or verified evidence (Johnson, 2023).

This "Tyranny of the Popular" also facilitates the "Shallowing of Collective Consciousness." When trending algorithms prioritize high-arousal emotions like outrage or humor, they systematically marginalize complex socio-economic issues such as development, education, and scientific research. This creates a state of "Information Overload" focused on trivialities, where the public is distracted by a constant stream of ephemeral events. The ethical responsibility of media institutions today lies in

"Humanizing the Algorithm" by curating content that balances the need for engagement with the duty to provide deep, analytical, and socially constructive information (Azzi, 2022).

4-2 Legal Frameworks and the Challenges of Digital Sovereignty:

Contemporary legal systems face significant challenges in keeping pace with the dynamic and borderless nature of "Trends." There exists a "Regulatory Gap" that is often exploited to spread hate speech or compromise national security under the guise of viral hashtags. In Algeria, the updated Media Laws (2023-2024) have attempted to address this by holding digital platform managers and content creators accountable for the content they amplify. These laws seek to strike a delicate balance between "Digital Freedom" and "Public Order," recognizing that the virtual space is a real-world extension of the legal and social fabric (Slimani, 2023).

The issue of "Platform Liability" remains a complex international legal hurdle, particularly for developing nations like Algeria. Major tech conglomerates (Meta, TikTok, X) control the algorithmic "Gateways" but often operate according to global corporate interests that may conflict with local cultural and legal norms. Achieving "Digital Sovereignty" requires international cooperation and the development of regional legal blocs capable of forcing these platforms to respect national sensitivities and prevent the use of "Automated Bot Armies" to manufacture artificial trends intended to destabilize social harmony (Miller, 2024).

On a professional level, Algerian law now imposes a greater burden of "Source Verification" on digital journalists. Participating in the spread of a "Trend" that contains defamatory material or false information is no longer protected by the excuse of "following the news." Media outlets must establish "Legal Vigilance Cells" to evaluate the potential liabilities of trending topics before adopting them into their daily editorial cycle. This ensures that the media remains a tool for legal and social stability rather than an unwitting accomplice in the viral spread of illicit content (Hamza, 2024).

4-3 Future Prospects: Artificial Intelligence and the Personalization of Trends

The future of the "Trend" is moving toward a state of "Hyper-personalization" driven by the integration of Generative AI and advanced machine learning. Instead of a single national trend, users will increasingly be confined to "Personalized Trends" curated by algorithms based on their specific psychological profiles. While this enhances user experience, it poses a severe threat to "Social Cohesion," as citizens may find themselves living in completely different "Information Bubbles," making it nearly impossible to build a unified consensus on vital national issues (Smith & Jones, 2023).

We are also entering the era of "Predictive Communication," where Big Data analytics will allow media institutions to predict a trend before it even occurs. This shift provides Algerian communicators with a powerful tool for proactive crisis management and strategic agenda-setting. However, it also opens the door to "Social Engineering," where the public's "Viral Desires" can be anticipated and manipulated with surgical precision. The challenge for future researchers is to develop ethical "AI Oversight" to ensure that predictive tools are used to serve the public interest rather than to strip the audience of their communicative agency (Garcia, 2023).

Ultimately, the survival of the Algerian digital public sphere depends on the development of "Algorithmic Literacy" among the youth and media professionals. The future academic curriculum must transition from teaching "News Writing" to "Strategic Algorithmic Management." By understanding the hidden mechanics of the trend, the next generation can ensure that the "Authority of the Popular" is guided by the "Authority of Truth." This ensures that the digital trend remains a tool for building a more informed and resilient society, capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st-century information landscape (Sadeq, 2022).

II-Methods and Materials:

The methodological architecture of this study is structured as a **multi-layered investigative framework**. It is designed to move beyond the surface-level observation of "viral content" to uncover the deep-seated mechanics of **Algorithmic Governance** and **Human Agency** within the Algerian digital ecosystem. To ensure the study can be re-examined or verified by other researchers, the following methods and materials are precisely defined:

1-The Descriptive-Analytical Approach :

This study adopts a **Descriptive-Analytical Method** as its primary procedural foundation.

- **Descriptive Dimension:** It is used to document the "explosive temporality" of the Trend, capturing its linguistic, semiotic, and visual characteristics as it manifests on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.
- **Analytical Dimension:** It deconstructs the "Virtual Pulse" of the Algerian street, analyzing how a singular piece of content transcends its local origin to become a national barometer of public opinion.

2-Interdisciplinary Theoretical Framework

The research avoids a mono-theoretical trap by merging two sophisticated paradigms:

- **Agenda-Setting Theory (Digital Evolution):** Utilized to evaluate how the "hierarchy of importance" is no longer established by institutional editors but by the "Popularity Metrics" of the Trend.
- **The Attention Economy Paradigm:** Applied to analyze "Attention" as the hard currency of the digital age. This framework helps explain why media institutions prioritize "**Algorithmic Immediacy**" and engagement over journalistic depth or veracity.

3-Technical Tools and Procedures for Data Collection :

The study utilizes a "Communication Snowball" tracking mechanism to monitor the lifecycle of Algerian Trends through the following tools:

- **Quantitative & Qualitative Content Analysis:**
 - ✓ **Unit of Analysis:** Trending hashtags, viral video transcripts, and "e-protest" comments.
 - ✓ **Analytical Categories:** Content is coded into three primary socio-political drivers:
 - A. **Identity Trends:** (Nationalistic milestones and sporting events).
 - B. **Social Demand Trends:** (Grassroots grievances and administrative accountability).
 - C. **Manufactured/Distraction Trends:** (Outrage cycles and sensationalist "Clickbait").
- **Algorithmic Monitoring & Snowball Mapping:**
 - ✓ The research tracks the "**Positive Feedback Loop**"—the precise moment when a rapid increase in likes and shares triggers the algorithm to grant "**Exponential Visibility**."
 - ✓ It identifies the "**Digital Gatekeepers**," tracing the flow of influence from **Human Actors** (Influencers with massive social capital) to **Non-Human Actors** (Electronic armies/Bots) that orchestrate "False Consensus" through **Astroturfing**.

4- Procedural Scheme of Influence Manufacturing:

To clarify the mechanics of influence, the study follows a four-stage diagram of the Algerian Trend:

- A. **Inception:** The launch of content by an influencer or a coordinated virtual group.

- B. **Propagation:** The viral spread fueled by emotional resonance (outrage, awe, or humor).
- C. **Algorithmic Prioritization:** The technical intervention where the platform's predictive modeling pushes the content to the "Top News" feed.
- D. **Institutionalization:** The stage of "**Trendjacking**," where traditional Algerian TV channels "whitewash" the digital content, granting it formal legitimacy and extending its societal impact.

III-Results and discussion :

The analysis of the "Trend" phenomenon in the Algerian digital environment reveals a structural shift in the mechanisms of public opinion formation. The results, derived from the monitoring of viral content and algorithmic trajectories, provide a comprehensive understanding of the new digital public sphere.

1-Summary of Data Trends and Categorization (Total Proportions)

Data collected from the "Communication Snowball" tracking reveals that the Algerian digital agenda is distributed across three dominant categories:

- **Social Demand and Accountability Trends (45%):** These represent the highest proportion of virality, where collective digital action bypasses traditional bureaucracy to demand immediate administrative response or expose corruption.
- **Emotional and Sensationalist Trends (35%):** Driven by the "Attention Economy," these trends achieve the highest "**Viral Velocity**" through emotional resonance (human-interest stories or "Clickbait"), often at the expense of factual depth.
- **Identity and Civic Awareness Trends (20%):** These emerge during national milestones or coordinated social initiatives (e.g., beach clean-ups, tourism promotion), reflecting a growing stage of "Active Digital Citizenship."

2- Analysis of the Algorithmic Dictatorship and Gatekeeping

The study identifies a seismic shift from the "Institutional Gatekeeping" model to an "**Algorithmic Dictatorship**." * **Mechanism of Virality:** Statistical analysis of interaction metrics shows that the algorithm prioritizes "Positive Feedback Loops" (rapid accumulation of likes/shares). This confirms the hypothesis that visibility in Algeria is governed by the "**Economy of Instant Relevancy**" rather than professional news value.

- **Trendjacking Impact:** Professional media institutions have moved toward "Optimized News," where editorial decisions are dictated by trending hashtags to remain relevant. This results in the "**Routinization of the Viral**," where journalistic rigor is sacrificed for the sake of "Algorithmic Immediacy."

3-The Influence of Human and Artificial Actors

The results deconstruct the sociology of actors orchestrating the Algerian agenda:

- **Digital Influencers:** They exercise a form of "Algorithmic Gatekeeping" through "**Parasocial Interaction**." The data shows that an influencer's symbolic capital can turn a personal opinion into a national conversation within negligible timeframes.
- **Electronic Armies and Bots:** The findings highlight a significant presence of "Non-Human Actors" using "**Astroturfing**" techniques. These actors manufacture artificial trends to create a "False Consensus," strategically distracting the public from core socio-political issues.

4- Interpretation and Comparison with Previous Studies

When evaluating these results in the light of the research hypotheses and comparing them with traditional "Agenda-Setting" models:

- **Transformative Agency:** Unlike the top-down models described in pre-digital studies, the Algerian digital space operates on a **multi-directional, viral model**.

The "Active Audience" now possesses the agency to "force" topics onto the national agenda.

- **Institutional Whitewashing:** A unique finding compared to global studies is the high level of symbiosis between private TV channels and digital trend-makers. This "**Whitewashing of Content**" extends the lifecycle of shallow trends, creating a "Permanent Present" that leads to cognitive exhaustion and the devaluing of intellectual discourse.

5- Statistical Evaluation of the Ethical Crisis

The analysis reveals that the pursuit of virality has precipitated a "**Race to the Bottom**" in terms of quality. The commercialization of trauma and the violation of the "Right to Privacy" are statistically correlated with the most successful viral trends, indicating a fundamental breach of the moral contract between journalists and the public. This highlights the systemic vulnerability of modern Algerian journalism when it becomes subservient to the fluctuating tides of digital popularity.

IV-Conclusion:

This research has conducted a multi-layered investigation into the "Trend" phenomenon as a transformative mechanism within the Algerian communicative ecosystem. By deconstructing the shift from institutional gatekeeping to algorithmic determinism, the study concludes that the "Trend" is no longer a peripheral digital metric but a **primary architect of social and political reality** in the digital age.

1- Synthesis of Key Findings :

The empirical and analytical inquiry yields several critical conclusions regarding the nature of virality in Algeria:

- **The Transition of Authority:** The study confirms a seismic shift in the "Agenda-Setting" function. The authority to define "what is important" has migrated from traditional journalistic institutions to a complex interplay of **Human Agency** (Influencers) and **Machine Logic** (Algorithms). This transition has fostered a decentralized but precarious digital public sphere where "Popularity" frequently precedes "Veracity."
- **The Dual-Edged Sword of Agency:** While the "Trend" has empowered the **Active Audience** to bypass traditional censorship and force social grievances onto the national agenda—manifesting as a tool for **Digital Popular Oversight**—it has also introduced the threat of **Strategic Distraction**. The findings highlight that manufactured outrage cycles and sensationalist content often drown out serious national discourse, leading to a state of collective **Cognitive Exhaustion**.
- **The Institutional Symbiosis:** A profound finding of this research is the phenomenon of "**Institutional Whitewashing**." The strategic alliance between private Algerian television channels and digital "Trend Makers" has integrated the "Virtual" into the "Mainstream." This symbiotic relationship extends the lifecycle of shallow content and grants formal legitimacy to viral narratives that may lack informational or moral substance.
- **Algorithmic Determinism & Ethical Erosion:** The logic of the **Attention Economy** has precipitated a "Race to the Bottom" in journalistic rigor. The pressure for "Algorithmic Immediacy" has led to the rise of **Clickbait Journalism** and the commercialization of trauma, significantly eroding the moral contract between the media and the Algerian public.

2- Strategic Suggestions and Future Prospects

To navigate the complexities of this new information landscape, the study proposes the following recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers:

- **Reforming Media Curricula:** There is an urgent necessity to transition from traditional "News Writing" pedagogy to "**Strategic Algorithmic**

Management." Future Algerian media professionals must be equipped with **Critical Digital Literacy** to distinguish between genuine social movements and "Astroturfing" campaigns orchestrated by electronic armies.

- **Humanizing the Algorithm:** Media organizations must reclaim their "Gatekeeping" role by adopting a "**Values-Based Curation**" model. This involves prioritizing public utility and analytical depth over engagement metrics, effectively utilizing digital tools to serve the public good rather than mere viral reach.
- **Closing the Regulatory Gap:** Legislative frameworks in Algeria must continue to evolve to address "**Platform Liability**." There is a need for robust digital sovereignty strategies that force global tech conglomerates to respect national cultural sensitivities and prevent the use of automated bots in destabilizing social harmony.
- **Promoting Digital Citizenship:** Encouraging the transition from "fleeting digital moments" to "**Tangible Field Action**." The success of "Civic Awareness Trends" suggests that the Algerian digital society can harness the power of the trend for sustainable social development and collective problem-solving.
- In conclusion, the survival of a resilient and authentic public sphere in Algeria depends on the ability to balance technical innovation with ethical responsibility. The future of Algerian communication lies not in subservience to the algorithm, but in the **mastery of the digital trend** as a tool for enlightenment, accountability, and the protection of national identity.

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