جامعة الأمير عبد القادر للعلوم الإسلامية قسنطينة – الجزائر
ISSN: 1112-4377, EISSN: 2588-2384
المجلد: 30. العدد. 04. السنة. 2026.
مجلة المعيار
EL MIEYAR

New Media and User Audiences: Reconfiguring the Dialectics of Influence in Digital Communication Environments

الميديا الجديدة وجمهور المستخدمين: إعادة تشكيل جدلية التأثير في بيئة الاتصال الرقمية

Debdouche Elhachemi [1]
e.debdouche@univ-blida2.dz
https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5868-2493

Received: 29/03/2026 ***published: 15/09/2026***
تاريخ الاستلام: 2026/03/29 تاريخ النشر: 2026/09/15

***Abstract*:**
The study examines transformations caused by the rapid growth of new media and their impact on media–audience relations. Traditional theories viewed audiences as passive within a linear sender–receiver model. The digital era redefines audiences as active users who create, share, and interpret content. The research adopts a theoretical and analytical approach to reassess media influence. It highlights the interaction between users, digital platforms, and algorithms shaping information flows. New media have not reduced influence but transformed it into a complex interactive process. The study introduces "algorithmic dialectical influence" as a new conceptual framework. It concludes that integrative models are needed to understand the interconnected roles of users, platforms, technologies, and algorithms.
***Key words* :** *New Media; User Audiences; Media Influence; Algorithms; Digital Platforms; Digital Communication.*

ملخص المقال :
استهدفت الدراسة الحالية التحولات التي أحدثتها التطورات السريعة للإعلام الجديد وتأثيرها على جدلية العلاقة بين الإعلام بالجمهور، النظريات التقليدية كانت ترى الجمهور كأشخاص سلبيين ضمن نموذج خطي للمرسل–المستقبل. أما العصر الرقمي يعيد تعريف الجماهير كمستخدمين نشطين يقومون بإنشاء ومشاركة وتفسير المحتوى، ترتكز الدراسة على منهجا نظريا وتحليليا لإعادة تقييم تأثير وسائل الإعلام على الجمهور، كما تسعى الدراسة لمعرفة التفاعل بين المستخدمين والمنصات الرقمية والخوارزميات التي تشكل تدفق المعلومات، لم تقلل الوسائط الجديدة من التأثير بل حولته إلى عملية تفاعلية معقدة. تقدم الدراسة "التأثير الجدلي الخوارزمي" كإطار مفاهيمي جديد .يخلص إلى أن النماذج التكاملية مطلوبة لفهم الأدوار المترابطة للمستخدمين والمنصات والتقنيات والخوارزميات.
كلمات مفتاحية: الوسائط الجديدة؛ جمهور المستخدمين؛ تأثير الوسائط؛ الخوارزميات؛ المنصات الرقمية؛ الاتصالات الرقمية.

1. *Unibersity of blida2 (Algeria)*

Introduction

New media has brought about a structural transformation in contemporary communication systems, not only in terms of the speed of information flow and the breadth of dissemination, but also in terms of reshaping the relationship between communication actors within the public sphere. While classical communication models often assumed a strong sender and a receiving audience within paths of influence closer to linearity, digital environments came to redefine "the audience" as a participating user, producer, and distributor of content, within interactive networks in which symbolic roles, powers, and resources intersect**.**

However, this transformation does not necessarily mean a decline or disappearance of media influence, but rather indicates a reformulation within new structures in which digital platforms overlap with market logic, algorithms, and data. Contemporary societies are witnessing what can be described as the "expansion of platforms" within daily life, such that the platform has become not just a technical medium, but a social-economic structure that influences civil, cultural and political practices, and rearranges public values and paths of participation (van Dijck et al., 2018) Therefore, the issue of influence is no longer governed solely by the content of the message or the efficiency of persuasion, but also by the technical environment in which messages are presented and the invisible mechanisms that determine what appears and what disappears.

In this context, the concept of algorithmic power emerges as a crucial input for understanding influence in the digital communication environment. Algorithms —particularly ranking and recommendation algorithms— perform a selective function that redefines "relevance" and "importance" to the user, making them an actual partner in producing public knowledge and directing attention within the public space (Gillespie, 2014). In this sense, platforms are turning into new "gatekeepers", but in a more complex way than traditional editorial guarding; Because it operates through automated accounts, variable preferences, and criteria based on interaction, profit, and user behavior.

The dominance of data logic also adds another dimension to the dialectic of influence. Digital interactions produce a dual effect: they give the user a sense of participation and effectiveness, but at the same time, they transform their activity into data that is captured, analyzed, and employed economically and politically. The "data colonization" perspective asserts that current digital relationships imprint social life with a logic of continuous tracking that offers unprecedented possibilities for classification, prediction, and behavioral influence, which sets new limits on user autonomy within platforms (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Hence, the central question becomes not: "Does the media influence?" Rather: "How is influence re-engineered when participation itself becomes raw material for extraction and analysis?".

These transformations also relate to rethinking the digital public sphere. Instead of envisioning a single "public sphere" within which voices compete, recent literature points to the multiplicity of public spaces on platforms, and the emergence of "networks of the public" that vary in levels of publicity, debate, knowledge, and mobilization, with a clear presence of the role of platforms and their human and algorithmic processes in directing communication (Communication Theory special issue editorial, 2023; OUP Communication Theory, 2023). Accordingly, the dialectic of influence within the new media cannot be reduced to the duality of "active audience" versus "dominant platform", but rather requires an interpretive approach that highlights the interaction between human agency (selection, participation, production) and platform structures (customization, arrangement, algorithmic governance).

The swift digital transformations have significantly altered the framework of modern communication, rendering traditional models of media-audience relationships, which depict a unidirectional message transmission from sender to receiver, obsolete. New media has helped create an interactive networked communication environment where the user is now a vital player in making and sharing content. This has changed the meaning of the word "audience" to mean an active user who helps shape the media discourse in the digital domain.

This shift toward interactivity does not mean that media influence will go away or that users will have all the power. Instead, it means that media influence will change in a more complicated digital system where

technical structures and users' communication practices are connected. Influence in the digital realm arises not solely from media messages but is also molded by algorithmic mediation processes that govern the flow of information across digital platforms, significantly determining the nature of the content that users encounter. In this context, this study endeavored to establish a theoretical framework elucidating the transformations in the concept of media influence during the new media era by introducing the "algorithmic dialectical influence" model, predicated on the notion that media influence in the digital sphere arises from the ongoing interaction among users, platforms, and algorithms. This model emphasizes that the link among these factors is characterized by dialectical dynamics, where influence is perpetuated through contact, algorithmic personalization, and content circulation across digital networks.

This study's scientific significance is its enhancement of the theoretical discourse regarding media influence in the digital era, by transcending conventional models and offering an interpretive framework that amalgamates user communicative efficacy with the technical architecture of digital platforms. This conceptual framework facilitates the formulation of further studies aimed at empirically and theoretically evaluating this model across various settings of new media utilization.

Even though the study's theoretical findings are significant, they are constrained due to the nature of the theoretical analytical study. This underscores the need for subsequent field studies employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the relationship between users, platforms, and algorithms more comprehensively. Future research may potentially examine the influence of algorithms on the formation of digital public opinion, or investigate the role of platforms in restructuring the public sphere in modern cultures. Consequently, comprehending the dynamics of media influence in the new media era necessitates the formulation of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks that integrate media and communication studies, the sociology of technology, and the digital economy, aimed at offering a more holistic understanding of the transformations within the communicative domain amid the evolving digital landscape.

1. New media and user audiences: Reshaping the impact dialectic in the digital communication environment

Media and communication studies have witnessed significant theoretical shifts in understanding the relationship between media and the audience, especially with the emergence of new media and the development of digital communication technologies. In classical communication models, the audience was viewed as a passive recipient directly influenced by media content. This perception was embodied in strong influence theories such as the magic bullet model or the hypodermic needle theory, which assumed the media's ability to directly and uniformly influence the masses (McQuail, 2010). However, this perception began to gradually change with the emergence of limited impact theories that focused on the role of social and cultural factors in shaping audience responses, such as the two-step flow theory which highlighted the role of opinion leaders in transmitting and interpreting media messages (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). The uses and gratifications theory also emerged to confirm that the audience is not a passive recipient, but an active agent seeking to use media to fulfilll certain cognitive, social, and psychological needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). With the development of the digital environment and the emergence of the internet and social media platforms, the idea of the active audience has been further reinforced. The new media has provided users with extensive capabilities to produce, publish, and interact with content, leading to a redefinition of the concept of the audience and its transformation into what is known as the user audience or networked audience (Castells, 2010). This concept indicates that individuals are no longer just recipients of media content, but have become participants in its production and dissemination within open digital networks. However, several researchers point out that this new user agency does not necessarily mean the disappearance of media influence or the complete transfer of power to the audience. In the context of the platform-based digital economy, major digital companies play a pivotal role in organizing the flow of information and determining what appears to users thru recommendation and ranking algorithms (van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018). These algorithms are

powerful tools for managing and directing attention, granting platforms indirect authority in shaping public discourse and prioritizing issues presented in the digital space. In this context, the concept of algorithmic authority has emerged, referring to the ability of digital systems to influence user behavior and choices thru content personalization and automated filtering processes (Gillespie, 2014). This concept is also associated with the phenomenon of filter bubbles, which may limit the diversity of information users are exposed to, potentially leading to the reinforcement of ideological polarization or the reproduction of prevailing cognitive patterns (Pariser, 2011). Recent studies indicate that the relationship between digital platforms and users is characterized by a complex dialectical nature, as users play a dual role in producing content and participating in public discussions, while their digital activity simultaneously becomes a source of data that platforms use to develop their economic and algorithmic models (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). In this sense, digital interaction not only represents an expression of the freedom to participate but also constitutes a part of an economic system based on data extraction and analysis. Based on that, many contemporary studies are re-evaluating the concept of media influence within the digital environment, where influence is no longer a one-way process moving from the medium to the audience, but rather a result of continuous interaction between users, platforms, algorithms, and the economic structures that govern them. Thus, understanding the relationship between new media and the audience requires a theoretical approach capable of interpreting these complex interactions, which is what this study seeks to achieve thru analyzing the dialectic of influence in the digital communication environment.

2.Toward the "Algorithmic Dialectical Influence" Model in New Media

The transformations brought about by new media indicate the necessity of re-evaluating classical models for interpreting media influence. While early theories started from a linear conception of the relationship between media and the audience, where the influence moves from the sender to the receiver thru a specific message, the digital environment has revealed more complex dynamics based on the continuous interaction between users, platforms, and algorithms. Thus, media influence is no longer a one-way process, but rather a result of a dialectical interaction between communicative actors and the technical structures that regulate the flow of information.

2.1 From the passive audience to the active network user:

The spread of the internet and social media platforms has contributed to redefining the concept of the audience. According to the perspective of the networked society, individuals are no longer just recipients of media messages; they have become active participants in content production and dissemination within interconnected digital networks (Castells, 2010). This means that the process of communication is no longer limited to a binary relationship between a sender and a receiver, but has become a network of interactive relationships where production and consumption overlap, known as participatory production culture (Jenkins, 2006).

2.2 Digital platforms as organizational structures for communication:

Despite this shift toward user participation, digital platforms do not operate as neutral spaces, but rather as organizational structures that control the flow of information and the distribution of attention within the digital space. Studies on platform societies indicate that major digital companies have begun to play a central role in organizing social and cultural interaction thru the design of user interfaces, content policies, and ranking and recommendation algorithms (van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018). Thus, the authority of platforms does not only manifest in the content itself, but also in the way information is organized and made available to users.

2.3 Algorithms as new mechanisms for reproducing influence:

The concept of algorithmic authority is gaining increasing importance in interpreting media influence in the digital age. Algorithms perform a selective function similar to that of a traditional gatekeeper, but they operate automatically based on the analysis of big data and user behavior (Gillespie, 2014). As a result, what the user sees within the platforms does not necessarily represent a complete picture of the informational reality, but

rather is the result of filtering and customization processes aimed at increasing engagement or achieving economic goals. This can lead to phenomena such as filter bubbles that limit the diversity of information available to the user (Pariser, 2011).

2.4 The dialectic of agency and control in the digital environment:

In light of the above, the relationship between the user and the platform can be understood as a dialectical relationship that combines individual agency and structural control. The user has the ability to produce, interact with, and disseminate content, but at the same time, they operate within a technological environment that determines what can be seen or shared. This continuous interaction between human action and technological structure indicates that media influence in the digital age cannot be explained by either side alone, but rather thru the interactive relationship between them.

2.5 The "Algorithmic Dialectical Influence" Model:

Based on this analysis, the study proposes a conceptual model known as the "Algorithmic Dialectical Influence" to understand the nature of influence in the digital communication environment. This model is based on four main elements:

- The network user: represents the communicative agent who participates in the production and dissemination of content within digital networks.
- Platform structure: This includes digital platforms that provide an interaction environment and set the rules for participation. Platform structure: It includes digital platforms that provide an interactive environment and set participation rules.
- Algorithmic mediation: These are the technical mechanisms that filter, sort, and customize information for users. Algorithmic mediation: These are the technical mechanisms that filter, organize, and customize information for users.
- Reproduction of meaning: Media effects are shaped thru the interaction between these three elements, leading to the reshaping of public perception of issues and events. Reproduction of meaning: Media influences are shaped thru the interaction between these three elements, leading to a reshaping of the public perception of issues and events.

According to this model, the media impact in the digital environment does not result solely from the media message, nor from user activity alone, but from the continuous interaction between users, platforms, and algorithms within a complex networked communication system.

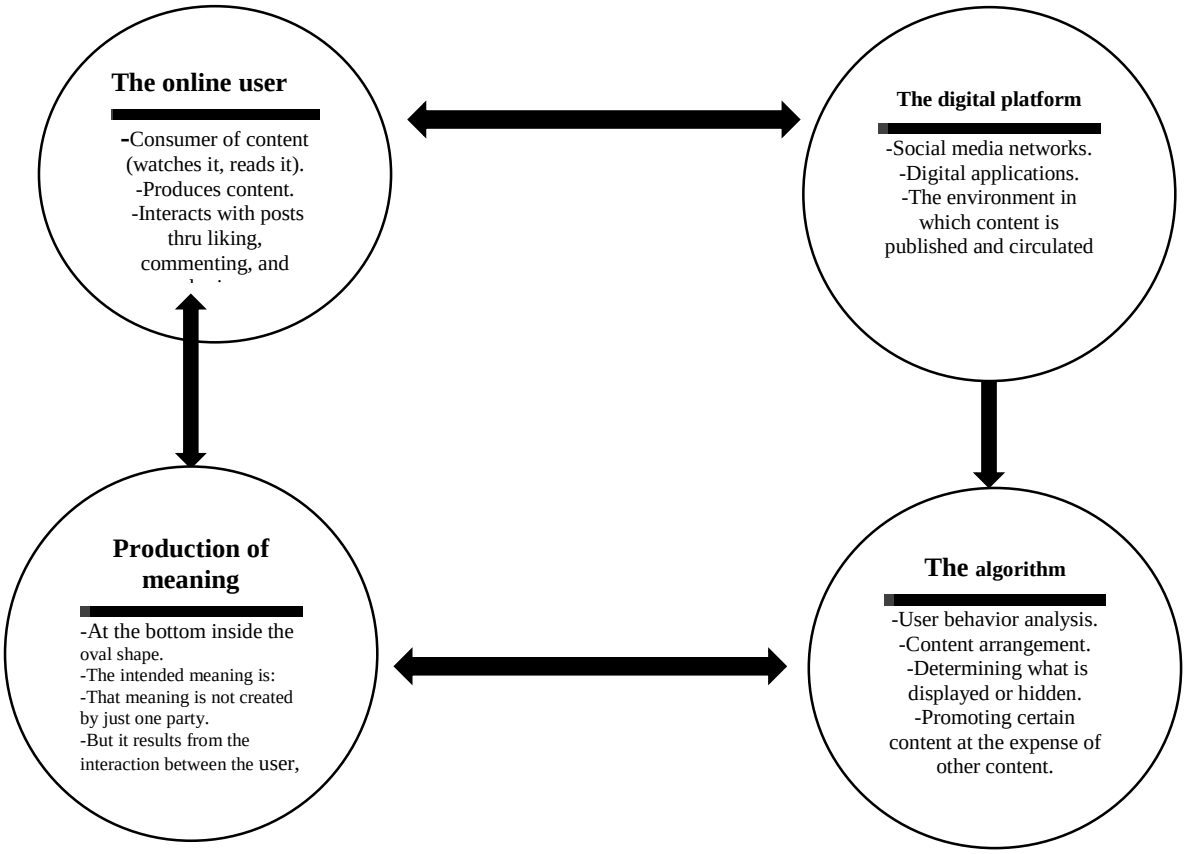


Figure 1. Algorithmic Dialectical Impact Model

3. Explanation of the Algorithmic Dialectical Impact Model in New Media

The algorithmic dialectical model of influence is grounded in the fundamental assumption that media influence in contemporary digital communication environments can no longer be understood as a simple, linear process flowing from a sender to a passive receiver. Traditional communication models—rooted in early mass communication theories-conceptualized influence as a one-way transmission in which media institutions produced content that audiences consumed with limited feedback or interaction. However, the emergence of new media has profoundly disrupted this paradigm, introducing a multidimensional and interactive ecosystem where influence is constantly negotiated and reconfigured. In this context, the algorithmic dialectical model posits that media influence is the outcome of a dynamic interplay between three key components: users, digital platforms, and algorithmic systems. These components do not operate independently; rather, they are interconnected in a continuous process of mutual shaping and feedback. Influence, therefore, is not imposed but emerges through ongoing interactions, tensions, and adaptations among these actors. This dialectical perspective emphasizes that each element both affects and is affected by the others, creating a constantly evolving communication environment. (Gillespie, 2014).

At the center of this model are users, who have transitioned from passive audiences to active participants in the communication process. In digital environments, users generate content, share information, comment, and engage in various forms of interaction that shape the visibility and circulation of media messages. Their behaviors-such as clicks, likes, shares, and viewing patterns—produce vast amounts of data that feed into digital systems. This shift toward participatory culture signifies a fundamental transformation in the nature of

audience agency, as users now play a crucial role in constructing meaning and influencing information flows. (Pariser, 2011).

Alongside users, digital platforms serve as the structural and institutional frameworks within which communication takes place. Social media platforms, content-sharing websites, and digital networks define the architecture of interaction by establishing rules, affordances, and constraints. They determine how content is produced, distributed, and accessed, as well as the forms of engagement that are possible. Platforms are not neutral intermediaries; they embed specific logics—economic, technical, and cultural—that shape communication practices. For instance, platform design influences what types of content are prioritized, how users interact, and how visibility is allocated across the network. The third critical component is algorithms, which function as the central organizing mechanisms of digital communication environments. Algorithms process user-generated data to filter, rank, and recommend content, thereby structuring the flow of information in highly personalized ways. They determine what users see, when they see it, and how frequently certain messages appear. In doing so, algorithms play a decisive role in shaping attention, engagement, and ultimately public opinion. Their influence is often opaque, operating through complex computational processes that are not fully visible to users, which raises important questions about transparency, power, and control.

The "dialectical" nature of the model becomes evident in the reciprocal relationships that link these three components. Users influence algorithms through their interactions and data production, effectively training algorithmic systems to adapt to their preferences and behaviors. At the same time, algorithms influence users by curating content and shaping the informational environment in which users operate. Platforms, in turn, structure both user practices and algorithmic operations by setting the rules and parameters within which interactions occur. This triadic relationship creates a system of continuous feedback loops, where influence is constantly produced, modified, and redistributed. (Gillespie, 2014).

One of the key contributions of the algorithmic dialectical model is its ability to conceptualize media influence as an emergent phenomenon rather than a fixed or predetermined outcome. Influence arises from the interaction of multiple forces and cannot be attributed solely to media institutions, technological systems, or audiences. Instead, it is the result of complex processes of negotiation and co-construction that unfold over time. This perspective challenges deterministic views of media power and highlights the importance of examining the interplay between human agency and technological mediation.

4.The Importance of the Model in Studying New Media

The algorithmic dialectical model provides a powerful analytical framework for understanding the transformations brought about by new media. Its importance can be highlighted through several key dimensions.

4.1 Interpreting the Nature of Media Influence in the Digital Age:

The model enables researchers to move beyond simplistic and reductionist notions of media effects that were traditionally confined to linear cause–effect relationships between media messages and passive audiences. Instead of assuming that media influence is direct, uniform, and predictable, the model encourages a more sophisticated analytical perspective that recognizes the multi-layered and dynamic nature of influence in digital environments. In contemporary communication ecosystems, influence is not a fixed outcome but a fluid process shaped by constant interaction, negotiation, and feedback among diverse actors (McQuail, 2010). By emphasizing interaction and reciprocity, the model highlights that influence emerges through ongoing exchanges between users, digital platforms, and algorithmic systems. Users do not merely receive information; they actively engage with it—by producing, sharing, commenting, and reacting-thereby contributing to its circulation and reinterpretation. At the same time, platforms structure these interactions through their technical architectures and governance policies, while algorithms continuously adapt to user behavior by filtering, prioritizing, and recommending content. This reciprocal process creates a networked environment in which each actor both shapes and is shaped by the others. (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Furthermore, the model accounts for the fact that media influence is distributed across multiple processes and levels, including technological mediation, social interaction, cultural interpretation, and institutional regulation. Influence is no longer centralized in traditional media institutions but is dispersed across a complex system where visibility, reach, and impact are contingent upon algorithmic logics and user engagement patterns. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). As a result, the pathways through which information spreads have become more intricate, involving mechanisms such as virality, network effects, and personalized content flows. This perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of how information diffusion operates in digital spaces. Rather than following a linear trajectory, information circulates through interconnected networks, where it is constantly reshaped by user interactions and algorithmic selection. Similarly, the formation of public opinion is understood as an ongoing, collective process influenced by exposure to diverse (or sometimes homogenous) content streams, shaped by algorithmic curation and social validation mechanisms such as likes, shares, and comments. (van Dijck et al., 2018)

Finally, the model provides deeper insight into how power operates in digital communication systems. Power is no longer exercised solely by media producers but is distributed among platforms that control infrastructures, algorithms that govern visibility, and users who participate in content dissemination. However, this distribution of power is not necessarily equal; platforms and algorithms often hold significant influence due to their control over data and access. By capturing these complexities, the model equips researchers with a more comprehensive framework for analyzing media influence in the digital age, one that reflects the intertwined roles of technology, human agency, and institutional structures.(McQuail, 2010).

The 2024 US presidential election is a compelling example of the influence of media in the digital age. During the campaign, platforms such as TikTok, X, Facebook, and YouTube became central arenas for political communication. Recommendation algorithms amplified emotionally engaging content, while generative AI tools enabled the rapid production of compelling images, videos, and text. Political campaigns, influencers, journalists, and ordinary users have shaped public narratives. Post-election research and analysis highlighted several mechanisms of digital media influence: Algorithmic personalization has exposed different users to different political realities, promoting selective exposure. The viral spread allowed political messages to spread quickly outside traditional news channels.

Often, influencers reach younger audiences more effectively than traditional political advertising.

Misinformation and deepfakes created by artificial intelligence have complicated citizens' ability to distinguish between original information and fabricated content.

Fact-checking organizations and platform management have tried to curb misinformation, showing that media influence is dynamic and contested rather than unidirectional.

This example shows that the influence of media in the digital age is no longer characterized by simple relationships between sender and receiver. Instead, the impact results from the interaction of technological algorithms, platform governance, user engagement, network effects, and artificial intelligence. As a result, media power has become decentralized, personal, and constantly negotiated between many actors within the digital communications ecosystem.

4.2 Understanding the Complex Relationship Between Users and Digital Platforms:

The model sheds light on the evolving relationship between users and digital platforms, highlighting the profound interdependence that structures communication in contemporary media environments. This relationship is not merely functional but deeply embedded in the socio-technical architecture of digital systems, where each side continuously shapes and redefines the other. Users rely on platforms as primary gateways to access, produce, and circulate information, making them central to everyday communication practices and public engagement. (Gillespie, 2014)Through these platforms, individuals can participate in discussions, construct identities, and contribute to the formation of digital publics. At the same time, platforms depend fundamentally on user activity to sustain their operational and economic models. User-generated content and behavioral data constitute the core resources that feed algorithmic systems, enabling platforms to personalize content, optimize engagement, and generate revenue through data-driven strategies. In this sense, users are not only participants but also producers of value within platform ecosystems. This mutual

dependence gives rise to a dynamic and constantly evolving relationship characterized by both empowerment and constraint. On one hand, users are empowered by unprecedented opportunities for expression, interaction, and visibility, allowing them to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and actively shape communication flows. On the other hand, this empowerment is conditioned by platform governance structures, including algorithmic curation, content moderation policies, and interface design, which regulate what can be seen, shared, or amplified. (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Consequently, user agency operates within a framework of controlled participation, where freedom and limitation coexist. Platforms exercise significant influence by structuring the conditions of interaction and visibility, often in ways that are not fully transparent to users. This creates a tension between autonomy and control, reflecting a dialectical relationship in which users both benefit from and are constrained by the very systems they rely on. Ultimately, the model reveals that the user–platform relationship is a complex, negotiated process shaped by ongoing interactions between human agency, technological infrastructures, and institutional power. (Gillespie, 2014)

The rise of TikTok offers an excellent example of the complex relationship between users and digital platforms. TikTok's recommendation algorithm continuously learns from users' interactions-including watch time, likes, comments, shares, and search history—to personalize each individual's For You feed. As users consume content, they unknowingly provide behavioral data that refines the algorithm's future recommendations. At the same time, users actively shape the platform's ecosystem. When a dance challenge, educational video, or social campaign gains popularity, millions of users recreate, remix, and share similar content, influencing what the algorithm promotes next. Thus, users are not merely passive consumers; they become co-creators of trends and contributors to the platform's evolving information environment.

A clear illustration is the BookTok community. Readers began posting short book reviews and recommendations, which generated massive engagement. In response, TikTok's algorithm amplified this content to broader audiences, leading to dramatic increases in book sales for many previously overlooked titles. Publishers, authors, and bookstores adapted their marketing strategies to align with the trend, demonstrating how user-generated content can reshape entire industries. This example highlights several dimensions of the user–platform relationship:

- Platform influences users by personalizing content, encouraging longer engagement, and shaping information exposure.
- Users influence the platform through their interactions, content creation, and collective participation, which continuously train recommendation algorithms.
- Algorithms mediate the relationship, determining which content becomes visible while adapting to users' changing preferences.
- Commercial and cultural actors (brands, creators, publishers, and advertisers) respond to these interactions, creating a feedback loop that continually transforms the digital ecosystem.

This case demonstrates that understanding the relationship between users and digital platforms requires viewing it as a dynamic, co-evolutionary process in which platforms shape user behavior while users simultaneously shape platform algorithms, content visibility, and digital culture. It exemplifies the participatory and data-driven nature of communication in the digital age.

4.3 Analyzing the Role of Algorithms in Shaping Public Opinion:

Algorithms play a central role in organizing digital communication, acting as the invisible infrastructure that structures how information is selected, ranked, and delivered to users. Rather than functioning as neutral technical tools, algorithms operate according to specific logics and criteria embedded within platform design, often oriented toward maximizing engagement, retention, and profitability. Within this context, the model provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the multifaceted impact of algorithmic systems on communication processes. By focusing on algorithmic mediation, the model enables researchers to explore

how content is filtered and prioritized based on user behavior, preferences, and interaction history. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). This selective exposure shapes individual information environments, determining what users see and what remains hidden. As a result, communication flows are no longer uniform or collective but increasingly personalized and fragmented. This personalization, while enhancing relevance, also contributes to the emergence of echo chambers, where users are primarily exposed to content that reinforces their existing beliefs, and filter bubbles, where alternative perspectives are systematically excluded. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955).

Moreover, the model highlights the presence of algorithmic biases, which may arise from the data used to train algorithms, the assumptions embedded in their design, or the economic objectives of platforms. These biases can influence the visibility of certain topics, voices, or narratives, thereby shaping public discourse in subtle yet significant ways. In some cases, algorithmic amplification may privilege sensational, emotional, or polarizing content, contributing to the spread of misinformation and the intensification of social divisions. (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

This analytical perspective is particularly crucial in the context of political communication, where algorithms play a decisive role in shaping citizens' exposure to political information, campaign messages, and public debates. The way content is curated can affect political awareness, participation, and opinion formation, raising concerns about democratic processes and the integrity of public discourse. Similarly, in the context of misinformation, algorithmic systems may inadvertently facilitate the rapid diffusion of false or misleading content by prioritizing engagement over accuracy. Ultimately, the model underscores that algorithms are not passive intermediaries but active agents in the construction of meaning and the distribution of power within digital communication systems. By examining their role, researchers can better understand how collective attitudes are formed, negotiated, and transformed in algorithmically mediated environments, where visibility, credibility, and influence are continuously shaped by complex interactions between technology, users, and institutional structures.

The 2024 European Parliament election illustrates how algorithms can shape public opinion in the digital era. During the election campaign, millions of citizens consumed political content through platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Rather than displaying information chronologically, these platforms relied on recommendation algorithms that prioritized content predicted to generate high levels of engagement.

As users interacted with political posts by liking, commenting, sharing, or watching videos for extended periods, the algorithms interpreted these behaviors as indicators of interest. Consequently, users were shown increasing amounts of similar political content, reinforcing particular viewpoints and limiting exposure to alternative perspectives. This process contributed to the creation of personalized information environments, often referred to as "algorithmically curated" media spaces.

Researchers and election observers also noted that emotionally charged content, sensational claims, and misleading information often spread more rapidly because such material generated higher engagement. Political parties, influencers, and advocacy groups strategically designed content to maximize algorithmic visibility, while fact-checking organizations and platform moderators attempted to reduce the spread of misinformation.

This example demonstrates several mechanisms through which algorithms shape public opinion:

- Personalization: Algorithms tailor political content based on users' previous behavior, creating individualized news feeds.
- Agenda-setting: By promoting certain topics over others, algorithms influence which political issues become most visible and widely discussed.
- Opinion reinforcement: Repeated exposure to similar viewpoints can strengthen existing beliefs and contribute to ideological polarization.
- Virality: Highly engaging content receives greater algorithmic amplification, regardless of whether it is accurate, increasing its influence on public discourse.

Strategic communication: Political actors increasingly optimize messages for algorithmic distribution rather than relying solely on traditional media. This case demonstrates that in the digital age, algorithms function as influential intermediaries between political information and citizens. Rather than merely organizing online content, they actively shape what people see, discuss, and believe, making algorithmic curation a significant factor in contemporary public opinion formation and democratic communication.

4.4 Surpassing Traditional Models of Media Influence:

One of the most significant contributions of the algorithmic dialectical model lies in its capacity to transcend traditional communication theories that are increasingly inadequate for explaining the complexities of digital media phenomena. Classical approaches to media influence—particularly linear models—were developed in the context of mass media systems characterized by centralized production and limited audience feedback. The hypodermic needle theory, for instance, assumed a direct and powerful effect of media messages on passive audiences, while later effects models introduced more nuance but still largely maintained a sender–receiver framework. Although these models were useful in their historical contexts, they struggle to account for the decentralized, participatory, and data-driven nature of contemporary digital environments.

In contrast, the algorithmic dialectical model acknowledges that communication today unfolds within networked systems where multiple actors interact simultaneously and continuously. Media influence is no longer transmitted in a linear fashion but emerges from complex processes of interaction involving users, platforms, and algorithmic systems. (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). This shift requires moving beyond deterministic assumptions toward a more relational and process-oriented understanding of communication. The model emphasizes that meaning, visibility, and influence are co-produced through ongoing exchanges rather than imposed unilaterally by media institutions.Furthermore, the model provides a multidimensional framework that integrates technological, social, and institutional dimensions of communication. On the technological level, it highlights the role of algorithms and digital infrastructures in organizing information flows and shaping user experiences. On the social level, it accounts for user practices, participatory cultures, and patterns of interaction that influence how content is created and circulated. On the institutional level, it considers the governance structures, economic models, and regulatory frameworks that define the operation of digital platforms. By bringing these dimensions together, the model offers a more holistic and comprehensive perspective on media influence. Additionally, the algorithmic dialectical approach is particularly well-suited for analyzing contemporary phenomena such as platformization, datafication, and algorithmic governance, which are central to understanding how power operates in digital communication systems. It recognizes that influence is distributed across different actors and mediated by technological systems, rather than being concentrated solely in traditional media organizations. This allows researchers to better examine issues such as control over information, the role of platform monopolies, and the impact of algorithmic decision-making on public discourse. (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

Ultimately, by overcoming the limitations of traditional theories and embracing the complexity of digital communication, the algorithmic dialectical model provides a robust theoretical foundation for analyzing media influence in the digital age. It encourages the development of integrative and interdisciplinary approaches that reflect the interconnected realities of modern communication environments, where human agency, technological systems, and institutional power are deeply intertwined.

The global spread of the MeToo movement on X, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok demonstrates how digital communication has surpassed traditional models of media influence. Traditional theories such as the Hypodermic Needle Model assumed that mass media transmitted messages directly to passive audiences through centralized institutions like newspapers and television. In contrast, the MeToo movement emerged from millions of individual users sharing personal experiences through hashtags, comments, videos, and reposts. Ordinary citizens, activists, celebrities, journalists, and organizations collectively amplified the movement without relying solely on traditional news organizations. Platform algorithms further accelerated the movement by recommending highly engaging posts to broader audiences, while users continuously reshared and discussed the content across multiple digital networks. Traditional media outlets later reported

on these online discussions, illustrating that influence flowed from social media to mainstream media, rather than only in the opposite direction.
This example demonstrates several ways in which digital media surpass traditional models of media influence:

- From passive audiences to active participants: Users create, modify, and distribute content rather than simply consuming it.
- From centralized communication to networked communication: Influence emerges from interconnected digital communities rather than a few dominant media institutions.
- From one-way transmission to interactive dialogue: Communication is continuous, participatory, and shaped by feedback among users, creators, and platforms.
- From editorial gatekeeping to algorithmic gatekeeping: Platform algorithms determine much of the visibility and reach of content.
- From national audiences to global digital publics: Messages can spread across countries within hours through social networks and digital communities.

This case illustrates that media influence in the digital age can no longer be adequately explained by traditional linear communication models. Instead, influence is produced through the interaction of users, algorithms, digital platforms, and networked communities, making media power more distributed, participatory, and dynamic than ever before.

Conclusion:

The swift digital transformations have significantly altered the framework of modern communication, rendering traditional models of media-audience relationships, which depict a unidirectional message transmission from sender to receiver, obsolete. New media has helped create an interactive networked communication environment where the user is now a vital player in making and sharing content. This has changed the meaning of the word "audience" to mean an active user who helps shape the media discourse in the digital domain.
This shift toward interactivity does not mean that media influence will go away or that users will have all the power. Instead, it means that media influence will change in a more complicated digital system where technical structures and users' communication practices are connected. Influence in the digital realm arises not solely from media messages but is also molded by algorithmic mediation processes that govern the flow of information across digital platforms, significantly determining the nature of the content that users encounter.
In this context, this study endeavored to establish a theoretical framework elucidating the transformations in the concept of media influence during the new media era by introducing the "algorithmic dialectical influence" model, predicated on the notion that media influence in the digital sphere arises from the ongoing interaction among users, platforms, and algorithms. This model emphasizes that the link among these factors is characterized by dialectical dynamics, where influence is perpetuated through contact, algorithmic personalization, and content circulation across digital networks.
This study's scientific significance is its enhancement of the theoretical discourse regarding media influence in the digital era, by transcending conventional models and offering an interpretive framework that amalgamates user communicative efficacy with the technical architecture of digital platforms. This conceptual framework facilitates the formulation of further studies aimed at empirically and theoretically evaluating this model across various settings of new media utilization.
Even though the study's theoretical findings are significant, they are constrained due to the nature of the theoretical analytical study. This underscores the need for subsequent field studies employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate the relationship between users, platforms, and algorithms more comprehensively. Future research may potentially examine the influence of algorithms on the formation

of digital public opinion, or investigate the role of platforms in restructuring the public sphere in modern cultures.

Consequently, comprehending the dynamics of media influence in the new media era necessitates the formulation of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks that integrate media and communication studies, the sociology of technology, and the digital economy, aimed at offering a more holistic understanding of the transformations within the communicative domain amid the evolving digital landscape.

Sources and references

- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). Data colonialism: Rethinking big data's relation to the contemporary subject. *Television & New Media*.
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. J. Boczkowski, & K. A. Foot (Eds.), *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society*. MIT Press.
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society: Public values in a connective world*. Oxford University Press.
- Editorial: Reconceptualizing public sphere(s) in the digital age? (2023). *Communication Theory, 33*(2–3).
- From "the" public sphere to a network of publics: Towards an updated framework. (2023). *Communication Theory, 33*(2–3).
- Algorithmic influence and media legitimacy: A systematic review. (2025). *Frontiers in Communication*.
- Castells, M. (2010). The rise of the network society. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism. Stanford University Press.
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. Foot (Eds.), Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society. MIT Press.
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications. Free Press.
- Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. Public Opinion Quarterly, 37(4), 509–523.
- McQuail, D. (2010). McQuail's mass communication theory (6th ed.). Sage.
- Pariser, E. (2011). The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you. Penguin Press.
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). The platform society: Public values in a connective world. Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. (2010). The rise of the network society. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. Foot (Eds.), Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society. MIT Press.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide. New York University Press.
- Pariser, E. (2011). The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you. Penguin Press.
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). The platform society: Public values in a connective world. Oxford University Press.