



SEMESTRE I 2025
NÚMERO 29

Communication Papers

**Media Literacy
& Gender Studies**

Carmen Echazarreta Soler (Directora)
Hasan Gürkan (Directoro adjunto y Editor inglés)
Albert Costa Marcé (Editor de proceos de indexación)
Cristina Olivas Ripoll (Secretaria)
Mümin Temel (Diseño y Producción)
Silvia Espinosa-Mirabet, Ege Göksu, Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov,
Eda Azap-Öztemel

VOLUMEN XIV · Número 29 · Año 2025 ·
ISSN 2014-6752 Revista bianual
www.communicationpapers.revistes.udg.edu/

Carmen Echazarreta Soler (Directora)
Hasan Gürkan (Director adjunto y editor inglés)
Albert Costa Marcé (Editor de procesos de indexación)
Cristina Olivas Ripoll (Secretaria)
Mümin Temel (Diseño y Producción)

COMITÉ CIENTÍFICO

Dr. Abderrahman el Fathi
Dr. Agustín Gómez
Dr. Alejandro Álvarez Nobell
Dra. Amparo Huertas Bailén
Dra. Amparo Moreno Sard
Dra. Andrea Oliveira
Dra. Ana Teresa Fernandes Peixinho
Dr. Antoni Sellas
Dra. Almudena Barrientos
Dra. Begoña Gutiérrez San Miguel
Dra. Belén Puebla Martínez
Dra. Caridad Hernández Martínez
Dr. Carlos Alberto Scolari
Dr. Carlos Camponez
Dra. Carme Ferré Pàvia
Dra. Celia Andreu Sánchez
Dra. Celia Romea Castro
Dra. Charo de Mateo Pérez
Dra. Concha Mateos Martín
Dr. Diego Ignacio Montenegro
Dr. Galo Villacís
Dr. Elías Machado Gonçalves
Dra. Eva Pujadas Capdevila
Dr. Felip Vidal Auladell
Dr. Hugo Méndez Fierros
Dra. Isabel de Salas Nestares
Dr. Josep Àngel Guimerà
Dra. Anna Fajula
Dr. Jorge Gallardo Camacho
Dr. Jorge Gabriel Henriques
Dr. José Carlos Costa Santos Camponez
Dr. José Luis Terron
Dr. Jorge Gallardo Camacho

Dr. Jorge Gabriel Henriques
Dr. José Antonio García del Castillo Rodríguez
Dr. Jorge Lozano Hernández
Dr. José Antonio del Castillo Rodríguez
Dr. José Antonio González Esteban
Dr. José Ignacio Aguaded-Gómez
Dr. José Luis Piñuel Raigada
Dr. José Manuel de Pablos
Dr. Joan Sabaté Picasó
Dr. Juan Benavides Delgado
Dr. Hasan Gürkan
Dra. Laura Bergés Saura
Dra. Lucía Benítez Eyzaguirre
Dra. Ma Carmen Fonseca Mora
Dra. Ma Luisa Humanes Humanes
Dra. Ma Luisa Pérez Cabani
Dra. María Gabino Campos
Mtra. Maricela López Ornelas
Dr. Mateu Sbert Casasayas
Dr. Moisés de Lemos Martins
Dra. Nekane Parejo
Dra. Núria Puig Borràs
Dra. Núria Simelio Sola
Dr. Pedro Manuel Molina Rodríguez-Navas
Dr. Peter Philips
Ddo. Sergio Cruz Hernández
Dra. Sílvia Aulet Serrallonga
Dra. Tatiana Hidalgo Marí
Dra. Teresa Gema Martín Casado
Dra. Victoria Camps Cervera
Dra. Victoria Tur Viñes
Dr. Xosé Soengas Fernández
Dr. Zakaria Charia
Dr. Zoubair Acharki

Carmen Echazarreta Soler (Directora), Hasan Gürkan (Director adjunto y Editor inglés), Albert Costa Marcé (Editor de procesos de indexación), Cristina Olivas Ripoll (Secretaria), Mümin Temel (Diseño y Producción), Silvia Espinosa-Mirabet, Ege Göksu, Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov, Eda Azap-Öztemel,



Communication Papers. Media Literacy and Gender Studies.

ISSN 2014 – 6752 Girona.

Edición I Diciembre 2025. **Universitat de Girona**

Palabras clave: comunicación, periodismo, publicidad, relaciones públicas, medios de comunicación de masas, redes sociales, tecnología, educación, aprendizaje y comunicación, medios de comunicación y género, acceso abierto, digital literacy.



ÍNDICE

Editorial

MARIA DEL CARMEN ECHAZARRETA SOLER

4

Artículos

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of
Talk Radio

Silvia Espinosa-Mirabet

5-27

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination
and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial
Arrangement in the Film Nasipse Adayız

Ege Göksu

28-43

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and
Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov

44-68

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on
Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Eda Azap-Öztemel

69-98

Book Review

Adam Aleksic. Algospeak: How Social Media Is Transforming the
Future of Language. Penguin Random House, 2025.

Hasan Gürkan

99-100



EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL Number 29 Communication Papers

Editora Communication Papers

We are pleased to present Volume 14, Issue 29 of Communication Papers, an international, peer-reviewed scientific journal focusing on media, communication, gender, and media literacy. This issue brings together a diverse set of research articles and an insightful book review that collectively illuminate the changing dynamics of media systems, political communication, digital cultures, and the transformations shaping contemporary communicative practices.

In this volume, the authors examine communication from multiple critical and interdisciplinary perspectives, extending from classical media institutions such as radio and cinema to emerging algorithm-driven platforms. The studies included here address not only the structural transformations of media but also their social, cultural, and political implications, offering readers a comprehensive vision of current debates in communication research.

The opening article analyses the future of general-interest radio through the experiences of Generation Z women journalists in Catalonia, revealing how young female professionals negotiate precarious working conditions, digital pressures, and the struggle to preserve radio's core values in an era increasingly shaped by social media and algorithmic environments. This contribution expands the discussion on gender, labor precarity, and the future of journalism, situating radio as a medium in transition that must redefine its identity to remain relevant.

The issue continues with a study exploring spatial politics in Turkish cinema, focusing on Ercan Kesal's *Nasipse Adayız*. Through Lefebvre's and Harvey's spatial theories, the article critically examines how political domination, hierarchy, and subject formation are represented through constructed spaces. By showing how modernist, populist, and neoliberal layers of Turkish political culture converge in spatial arrangements, the article enriches ongoing scholarly discussions on cinema, ideology, and spatial power.

Another significant contribution addresses media and information literacy (MIL) in Uzbekistan, offering an in-depth examination of the role of foreign aid in supporting MIL initiatives in emerging democracies. Through interviews with experts and trainers, the study identifies structural challenges, opportunities, and sustainability issues within donor-driven MIL projects. This research provides valuable insights for policy-makers, NGOs, and global actors seeking to strengthen media literacy frameworks in transitional societies.

The fourth article investigates algorithmic culture and digital activism, emphasizing how visibility economies, emotional algorithms, and platform governance shape contemporary social movements. By bridging theories of connective action with platform-based activism, the study demonstrates how algorithmic infrastructures influence political participation, visibility strategies, and mobilization practices. This contribution is particularly relevant in an era where civic expression increasingly operates under the logics of algorithmic curation.

Finally, the book review included in this issue — Adam Aleksic's *Algospeak: How Social Media Is Transforming the Future of Language* — offers an intellectually stimulating examination of how algorithmic moderation shapes linguistic practices in digital environments. The review highlights Aleksic's arguments on algorithmic pragmatics and linguistic adaptation, connecting them to broader debates on platform governance, digital culture, and communication theory.

Best wishes,
MARIA DEL CARMEN ECHAZARRETA SOLER



Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Received: 10 July 2025; **Accepted:** 27 November 2025

Silvia Espinosa-Mirabet
Faculty of Tourism, University of Girona, Girona, Spain
silvia.espinosam@udg.edu
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8304-5882

CONTENT TABLE

- Abstract & Introduction
- Methodology
- Results
 1. The future of radio depends on the use of social media
 - a. Figure 1: Relationship with Social Media.
Source: own elaboration
 2. Radio, fake news and technological advancement
 3. Podcasts cannot replace live radio
 - a. Table 1 provides a summary of the different perspectives on podcasting.
 4. Radio journalism as essence of radio
 5. The feminine and feminist perspective on the issues
 6. Young people do not listen to traditional radio, but they do consume radio content
 7. Negative perceptions of the job
 8. Management and gender
 - a. Figure 2. Ready for management: preferences. Source: own elaboration
 9. Work-life balance is a challenge
 10. Changes they would make in their radio stations
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- References

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Abstract

This study explores the current and future state of Catalonia's general-interest (non-local) radio landscape from the perspective of female journalists under the age of 30. This is a topic of study that has so far remained unexplored. Designing a qualitative methodology, the research is based on 18 in-depth interviews with professionals working as reporters, editors, presenters, scriptwriters, and producers, at the six most influential radio stations in Catalonia, according to official Spanish audience surveys (EGM): RAC1, SER Catalunya, COPE, ONDA CERO, Catalunya Ràdio, and Ràdio 4. The findings reveal a precarious working conditions sector with increasing professional stress, attributed to the growing pressure to produce and adapt content for social media platforms. While the participants acknowledge the need for greater inclusivity and audiovisual integration in the future of radio, many express concern over a shift away from the traditional essence of the media. Generation Z journalists argue that radio must maintain its identity as an accessible, intimate, and trusted source of information, positioning itself as a vital counterweight to misinformation. This research contributes to understanding how young women in journalism perceive the evolution of the media in transition, and how they navigate the tensions between innovation and continuity in a rapidly changing media environment.

Keywords: "journalism"; "general-interest radio"; "Z Generation"; "women and radio"; "radio and social media"; "future of radio".

Introduction

The discussions about the present and future of radio have traditionally been dominated by men (mostly white established professionals) who have historically narrated the evolution of the media. Now that Spanish radio has reached its centenary, it is timely and necessary to explore how this media is interpreted by young female journalists under the age of 30, who statistically represent its future, because the past and the role of women as radio workers, has already been documented.

This article highlights the important role women have played in radio. It aligns with the current trend of making women's work in the media more visible, contributing a perspective that has not yet been studied: a future-oriented vision of radio as interpreted by young female journalists who will live that future within the radio industry. The historical tendency to explain media in Spain from a male point of view, as said, has gradually been reversed, thanks to numerous publications such as those by Franquet (1982–2001), Balsebre (2001; 2018), Espinosa (2012 to 2024), Pérez-Martínez (2016), Barrera (2018), and Blanco Fajardo (2018). All analyses agree that radio in Spain has not traditionally been a feminist medium. The pioneering female radio hosts had little in common with their listeners. They were literate women, (unlike the majority of their audience, who were often illiterate), religious, and generally came from families leaning towards the political right. Many worked

¹

This study was carried out with the support of the 3rd Montserrat Minobis Audiovisual Communication Grant.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

in radio because they enjoyed it, without necessarily needing the job for financial reasons (Espinosa, 2014).

Therefore, this article aims to highlight how female journalists under the age of 30 perceive radio as a media and as their job. To achieve this, 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with professionals from the six leading radio stations in Catalonia, as identified by the EGM, as detailed in the methodology section. To understand the perspectives of young female journalists, it is essential to first provide a brief overview of the evolution of women's roles in Spanish mainstream radio, along with key data that contextualize their relationship with the medium. The following section also outlines characteristics of Generation Z (those under 30 years old), offering background to better interpret their contributions.

Radio, as media outlet, has not historically been a feminist mean, nor has it served as a platform for feminism in Spain. The pioneering female broadcasters generally represented a conservative social stereotype, enjoying a purchasing power and academic background well above the average for Spanish women or audiences at the time. This situation was slow to change; just as the Second Republic (1931-1939) had begun to open doors, the Civil War (1936-1939) and subsequent Franco dictatorship stifled any progress for nearly 40 years. As a result, radio in Spain became a traditionally conservative media: its founders and owners in the early 20th century were entrepreneurs, members of the bourgeoisie, and even aristocrats (Balsebre, 2001).

During the dictatorship, according to Espinosa-Mirabet (2020) women's advisory programs (propaganda formats disguised as content and advertising advises, directed at female audiences) did indeed elevate female broadcasters to stardom, though never from an emancipatory or equality-based perspective with male radio workers. They voiced scripts written by men aligned with the regime.

However, women have always worked in radio, as secretaries, musical performers, or announcers. It was not until the 1960s that some women once again assumed prominent on-air roles, though always within the patriarchal norms imposed by the dictatorship and within programming formats focused on emotional support and entertainment. In none of these cases was there any indicator of opposition to the regime. Notable examples include María Matilde Almendros at Radio Nacional de España (RNE), Odette Pinto at Radio España in Barcelona, and Encarna Sánchez at COPE

²

This study focuses on Catalonia, the birthplace of Spanish radio and one of the autonomous communities in Spain with a high concentration of radio stations (Martí et al., 2015). It is also, after Madrid, the Spanish region with the highest GDP in terms of economic output and foreign investment, the second most economically powerful region in the country, the region with the second-highest investment in media advertising after Madrid (Infoadex), and it hosts the largest number of universities offering Journalism Studies.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Beginning in the 1980s in Spain (the new democratic era called Transition), with the emergence of free and community radio stations, the content and approaches of programming began to shift, and feminism began to find a place in some programs or sections, initially in these more underground stations, and later in mainstream general-interest broadcasters. This shift is closely tied to the arrival of democracy, which saw the emergence of the professional radio journalist (both men and women) now trained at university level. Radio content also began to change significantly, increasingly focusing on social, political, and feminist, pacifism or ecology issues (Pérez Martínez, 2016) representing a qualitative leap away from the 19th-century conservatism that had long defined the medium. Despite this progress, it would still take many years for women in Spanish radio to attain equal standing with their male counterparts and to direct or lead programs beyond entertainment or traditionally “female” content.

There was still a long road ahead before women would become audience leaders. Starting in 2012, two female journalists, Pepa Bueno and Gemma Nierga, directed *Hoy por Hoy*, Spain’s most widely listened-to radio program. Led by two women, their feminine and at times feminist sensitivity was reflected in the way certain topics were approached in the programme (Espinosa-Mirabet, 2020). In Catalonia’s public radio, Catalunya Radio, Mònica Terribas directed the most listened-to news program (2013-2020), which included a section titled “Quadern feminista” (“Feminist Notebook”), addressing social issues from a gender perspective. However in none of these cases were they explicitly feminist advocacy programmes. But, they were prime time shows led by women, something that never had happened before in Spain.

Beyond the historical overview, the current presence of women in radio sector, are most prominently represented in leadership roles within local and municipal stations, with fewer in positions of responsibility in regional or national broadcasters. A recent qualitative study by Espinosa-Mirabet, Puntí, and Serra (2024) examines the presence of women in mainstream Catalan radio (the same media companies under examination here) highlighting a strong professional moment for women in the field. Notably, they have begun to break the glass ceiling in two historically male-dominated areas: technical and executive departments. The presence of women technicians is increasing, though stark disparities persist between public and private broadcasters, as none of the private stations surveyed employ women in technical roles. *Ràdio 4* stands out as the station with the highest number of women in technical and editorial positions.

For the first time, a woman leads the top-rated station in Catalonia, *RAC1*, and three additional networks, two public (*Ràdio 4* and *Catalunya Ràdio*) and one private (*SER Catalunya*) are currently regionally directed by women outside the Barcelona metropolitan area.

This conclusion closely resembles the one pointed out by Terol (2021) when she refers to a “false feminization” in newsrooms. The author explains that although women are more present than men in newsrooms, their presence is characterized by a high dropout rate; they tend to occupy positions with little responsibility; they

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

are more visible in sectors considered peripheral; and their professional trajectories are often marked by shifts toward less visible professional spaces, which are, however, more compatible with private life.

The editorial decisions and production routines of this new generation of radio journalists will inevitably shape the radio of the future, a medium that will likely operate within a technological landscape dominated by generative and predictive AI tools, a context of social and political instability, and evolving audio consumption habits. Despite general uncertainty in the sector, these journalists are entering a profession increasingly supported by advertisers, whose investment in radio has risen since the COVID-19 pandemic (Infodex, 2025).

With the consolidation of the medium in the digital era (despite predictions about its decline and its evolution) radio in Spain now faces a future where women will, in numerical terms, surpass men as workforce.

In Spain, women constitute approximately 60% of journalism graduates with around one thousand more women than men earning journalism degrees each year (Orús, 2020). It is worth noting that despite being more numerous, universities place little emphasis on inclusion, as highlighted by the WJEC (2023). This global institution points out that journalism education should be more sensitive to technological and social changes and, in this regard, promote diversity and inclusion.

With 11 universities offering degrees and master's programmes in communication, Catalonia graduates nearly 20,000 students annually (Department of Research and Universities, 2022), many of whom are women. Although women currently make up the majority of journalism graduates, Generation Z women working in Catalan radio newsrooms remain a minority. According to the Journalists' Union of Catalonia, most radio professionals are between 35 and 54 years old. Women account for 48.4% of radio listenership (EGM, 2024), yet appear as sources in only 20% of news coverage globally (Macharia, 2020). The Association of Professional Catalan Journalists registers 4,400 professionals, of whom 2,024 are women. Among these, 300 are under the age of 30. However, given that membership records do not specify the mean in which journalists are employed, it is currently not possible to determine the proportion of young female journalists working specifically in the radio sector.

Despite these promising educational figures, the transition of women into leadership roles remains a persistent challenge across the media industry, mirroring broader patterns in the business world. Women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions and tend to occupy roles that are structurally and symbolically distant from those held by their male counterparts. According to a 2023 report by the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford (Ramírez, 2023), only 19% of executive roles in Spanish media are held by women, while 80% of directors are men. The report underlines that this disparity is not merely a matter of numbers, but reflects deeper systemic and cultural obstacles that continue to limit women's access to power and influence in the media landscape.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Those who set the editorial line make staffing decisions, and inevitably, project a vision of society through headlines, priorities, and the space allocated to each topic are key to the provision of information services. (Ramírez, 2023: 2)

Jiménez (2014) analyzed the presence of women in executive roles within major Spanish radio companies (the focus of our study) and found that neither Catalunya Ràdio, RNE, nor Onda Cero had a significant proportion of women in management. In all cases, the percentage of women in leadership roles failed to reach 25%, and salaries remained lower than those of their male counterparts.

Men continue to dominate the upper tiers of the radio industry, occupying three-quarters of senior management positions and two-thirds of decision-making roles related to content. This persists despite the fact that women, on average, possess higher academic qualifications and more extensive professional training in journalism (Ruipérez, 2018).

Although women are increasingly present in editorial positions, especially in digital media, where some progress has been noted, they remain underpaid and underrepresented in traditional broadcasting structures.

The precarisation of journalism has prompted many women to transition toward communication departments, a trend noted by Fanals (2021). In a related interview, Bages (2021) observed that journalists working in corporate communication report higher levels of job satisfaction, not necessarily due to salary, but because of more predictable working hours, a particularly significant factor for journalists who are mothers.

Within the broader communication field, public relations stands out as the most balanced sector in terms of gender. In Spain, women occupy over 72% of PR roles, with 56.9% in managerial positions. Nonetheless, pay disparities persist (ADC, 2020). The Journalists' Union of Catalonia (SPC, 2022) reports that only a few radio stations have implemented Equality Plans and openly acknowledges the persistence of a glass ceiling in the sector. At a roundtable held on March 8, 2024, at SER Catalunya, participants emphasized how radio journalism continues to compel women to choose between their professional and personal lives.

(...)And here the debate lies in whether women journalists are willing to give up their personal lives as some female politicians have done... which could explain the high rate of single, divorced, or separated women in the field. Or whether it is necessary to change the foundations of a patriarchal society that forces women to choose, when men have never been required to make such a choice, and thus remain in the executive offices of media organizations. (March, 2024)

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

This study aims to define how young women journalists under 30 perceive what radio is, and what it is becoming, through their experiences in mainstream (non-local) radio stations in Catalonia.

In this way, this work will also contribute to a better understanding of Z Generation, because normally the focus on Generation Z tends to centre on their media consumption: what they watch, buy, read (Manrique, 2025) or play (Baykal, 2023; Shliakhovchuk et al, 2021) rather than their roles as content creators. The testimonies of young women working in radio offer a rare and valuable insight into how this generation navigates a precarious, digital-first industry, often within multicultural and multilingual contexts (Marugán & Martí, 2023).

(...) with a global and highly respectful mindset. Possibly the most individualistic generation, in which each person constantly seeks self-affirmation in relation to the group, using social media to do so. (...) Socially committed and responsible, and fond of images, emojis, and memes. (...) Most are still adolescents highly susceptible to the influence of celebrities, thus immersed in the so-called 'fan phenomenon.' They are independent in seeking and finding information and consume twice as much video content as static images. It is said they have a maximum attention span of 8 seconds, due to the speed at which they receive responses online; hence, they are considered a rather impatient generation. (Marugán and Martí, 2023:36)

Chen et al. (2023) support this analysis, noting that unlike previous generations who consumed media more passively (e.g., television and radio), Generation Z seeks personalization, immediacy, and active engagement. According to these authors, this is a generation that favors digital platforms, short-form visual content (such as TikTok and Instagram Reels), and interactive communication. In Catalonia, according to data from the Generalitat, Generation Z accounts for approximately 16.1% of the population in 2025. The proportion of Generation Z in Catalonia is slightly lower than in Spain (18% of the population in 2025) and similar to the European average (between 15% and 17%), although below countries with higher birth rates such as Ireland, France, and Sweden, according to statistics from INE and IDESCAT. In this context, it is relevant to highlight Tirocchi's (2024) thesis, which points out that young people under the age of 30 have distanced themselves from traditional media outlets. According to the author, this generation shares values shaped by influencers and content creators rather than traditional media, and this shift is directly linked to their social and communicative expectations.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Methodology

To achieve the research objective, namely, to understand how feminine Generation Z journalists currently working in mainstream radio perceive its present and future, a qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews was adopted. It was considered that in-depth interviews would provide deeper insight into the perspectives of the subjects under study. Therefore, according to Díaz-Bravo et al. (2013), flexibility and the capacity to facilitate open, reflective responses are essential features of qualitative research methods.

The 18 participants work at the six leading general-interest radio stations in Catalonia, as measured by EGM audience data: RAC1 (Grup Godó), Catalunya Ràdio (CCMA), SER Catalunya (Prisa Media), COPE Catalunya (Àbside Media), Onda Cero Catalunya (Atresmedia Radio), and Ràdio 4 (RTVE/RNE).

At the time of data collection (November 2024 and January 2025), they were working in different positions within newsrooms: sports reporter (2), news reporter (1), news and bulletin reporter (7), programme presenter (2), news editor (2), editor and presenter (2), and news programme producer (2). In two cases, sports and magazine shows, the journalists also managed their programmes' social media. Most were salaried employees; three were freelancers, and two were unpaid interns. Participants were selected based on age and with the cooperation of the station's management (except in one case), who provided lists of Generation Z journalists under contract. The selection was random. Most participants were between 26 and 27 years old, held Journalism degrees from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), and had around three years of radio experience.

Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted via Microsoft Teams. All were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized to preserve confidentiality and ensure freedom of expression. Transcriptions retained the literal speech of participants, including oral and stylistic variations, to preserve the authenticity of their voices (Izcarra & Andrade, 2003).

The participants were unaware of each other's involvement. The data analysis suggests that the specific identity of the speaker is less relevant than the significant consensus observed, which can be explained by Mannheim's (1952) concept of a generational unit: shared social and cultural experiences in youth foster a collective framework of meaning and values.

The interview guide was developed through a comprehensive review of existing literature and organized into four thematic areas: (1) technology and its influence; (2) content transformation; (3) new listening and consumption habits; and (4) inclusion in newsrooms and access to leadership positions.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Result

The journalists interviewed agree that the future of radio depends on its ability to adapt to new media consumption habits without losing its core principles: immediacy, factual accuracy, and a sense of companionship. At the same time, they acknowledge an increasing shift toward an audiovisual environment. Although this evolution is not widely welcomed, it is largely perceived as inevitable.

1. The future of radio depends on the use of social media

Social media platforms are considered essential for content dissemination, building audience relationships, and identifying emerging trends. The interviewees call for a more strategic and robust presence of mainstream radio on digital platforms. They also criticize the lack of planning and agility when it comes to delivering high-quality content adapted to social media environments. One of the main reasons identified for these shortcomings is the generational profile of many executives in charge of content and strategy.

I think we're at a point where... I don't know how to say this without it sounding... There are people who are borderline unqualified for the kind of journalism being done today. Especially when it comes to social media. So I believe we should start taking over positions that have been held for far too long by people who work in a completely different way. I think we're ready for the technologies that are coming and for the new ways of informing. (Journalist no. 6; Radio station no. 2, private)

The young journalists interviewed (Figure 1) primarily use social media to disseminate their own content, often independently of the station's official channels. Their use of these platforms reflects a proactive stance and a desire to connect directly with audiences. This generational approach is also tied to their understanding of journalism as a dynamic, participatory, and real-time activity.

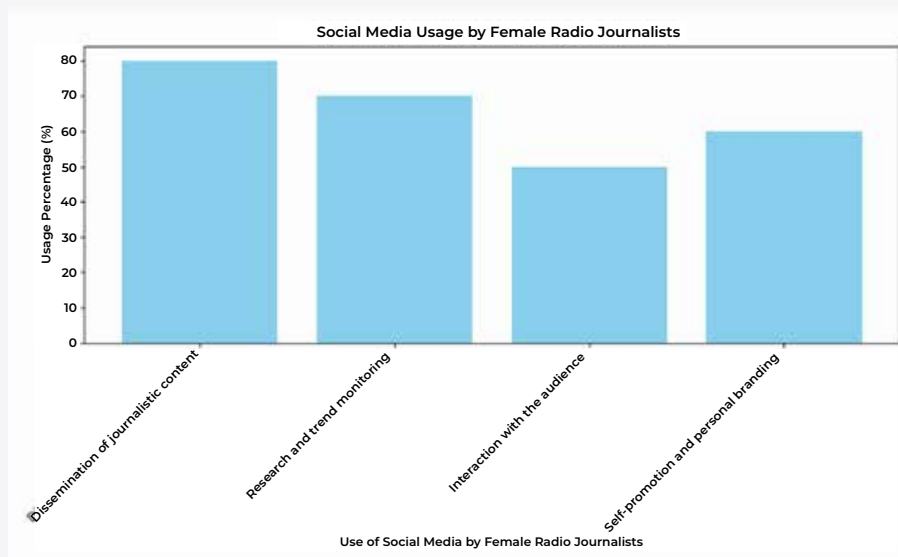


Figure 1: Relationship with Social Media. Source: own elaboration

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

The use of social media for content dissemination, according to the interviewees, leads to the creation of shorter and less in-depth pieces. They warn of the risks associated with compromising journalistic rigor in order to adapt to brief and viral formats.

2. Radio, fake news and technological advancement

The interviewees unanimously defend radio as a trustworthy medium in an increasingly saturated digital environment marked by misinformation. They highlight its capacity to act as a filter and a verification tool in contrast to the speed and volatility of social media content.

(...) because, of course, you see something on social media and it spreads, I don't know, a thousand times more than on the radio... and then you investigate and it's not even true! So you have to go on air and debunk it, and you even have to make an extra effort, right? To figure out what's true and what isn't.
(Journalist no. 10; Radio station no. 1, private)

Faced with these challenges, the journalists interviewed stress the need for greater investment in technological infrastructure and the implementation of coherent digital strategies. These should not only include well-trained staff but also the provision of adequate equipment to ensure the quality of both audio and video content.

(...) I think we need a well-thought-out digital strategy, with investment not only in personnel. Well trained but... and in equipment, in the cameras we were talking about, to ensure high quality not only in audio but also in video.
(Journalist no. 9; Radio station no. 5, public)

When the data was collected (early 2025), journalists reported that AI tools were used rather infrequently and primarily for tasks such as audio transcription or drafting texts. Nonetheless, they express ambivalence, emphasizing the need to preserve the emotional and human components of journalism, a concern aligned with the reflections of Buitrago and Martín-García (2024) on the emotional dimension of AI.

Sometimes I even ask myself: Wow, what if one day... these intelligences end up doing my job? Right? What sets me apart from a machine that can report the news? And it's a bit scary. Yes, yes, fear and respect.
(Journalist no. 2; Radio station no. 3, private)

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

3. Podcasts cannot replace live radio

The journalists interviewed defend the unique value of live radio and reject the idea that podcasts could fully replace it. They underscore the immediacy, diversity, and dynamic rhythm of traditional radio broadcasting as essential features that podcasts cannot replicate.

I mean, I see it, I see it positively because, for me, as long as people are listening, we're listening, we're consuming audio content, right? I think nothing is dead in that sense. The real problem would be if we stopped listening all together. What I do think is that you shouldn't just listen to a podcast about something you already know or are interested in (...). When you listen to the radio, you're exposed to a wide range of content, from a news bulletin that updates you on current events to a programme that talks about, I don't know, sexuality (...). That allows you to touch on many different topics. If you only listen to podcasts... that's great, but let's explore other areas too, right?

(Journalist no. 2; Radio station no. 3, private)

Table 1 provides a summary of the different perspectives on podcasting.

| Positive Arguments about Podcasting | Negative Arguments about Podcasting |
|---|--|
| Allows content to be listened to at any time, without depending on live broadcasting. | May reduce the audience for live radio. |
| Facilitates access to information and to new (young) figures who consume audio via digital platforms. | The proliferation of podcasts may compromise journalistic quality in some cases. |
| Serves as a complementary tool to radio that can help expand the audience, especially in the field of educational content | The audiovisual format of video podcasts does not convince some users, who feel it undermines the essence of audio |
| Enables the dissemination of content that does not always have space in traditional media. | There is an oversupply of a specific type of content.. |
| Can be better adapted to current consumption habits, including the use of social media for promotion | There is too much offer available. |

While most recognize the added value that podcasting brings to the broader audio ecosystem, a minority of the interviewees question the sustainability of its current volume and growth. They express concern that the oversaturation of podcast content could eventually lead to audience fatigue or fragmentation.

It's clear that this will evolve somehow. I don't know about podcasts, because in the end, you get the feeling that everyone has a podcast and that it's very easy to make them, which is probably true, but there just isn't enough space for so many podcasts.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

So, since everything changes so quickly, yes, the podcast trend is clearly here, and it's been around for years, but I think it's obvious that one day it will disappear and be replaced, maybe by radio, maybe by video podcasts, but definitely by something else. Still, I hope we manage to keep radio going in some form.

(Journalist no. 2; Radio station no. 3, private)

4. Radio journalism as essence of radio

The interviewees assert that live radio retains its essential value through its emotional bond with audiences, its immediacy, and its credibility. They advocate for a rigorous, carefully crafted form of journalism that remains true to radio's core identity while embracing new formats. However, they also express frustration with the pace imposed by current production routines, which they consider detrimental to journalistic quality.

I think the speed at which we have to report the news is brutal. It's the pace set by the times. And also, the ease that social media gives us for breaking news. Like I said: you see something on Twitter, you call the police, confirm it quickly, and that's it. But wow! What if we had the whole day to go to where the event happened, get closer, talk to people, see what the police say on site? I wish we had that time, but while we're trying to understand one story properly, another press release comes in. I wish we could do things with the calm and rigor they require.

(Journalist no. 2; Radio station no. 3, private)

The prevailing sense is that the current model of work is unsustainable and harmful to journalistic rigor. Many regret the normalization of multitasking, where a single news piece must be repurposed across multiple formats: a written article, social media posts, video content, and more.

I think journalism needs to return a bit more to 'slow journalism', because right now everything moves so fast and we're constantly generating news. We have to update information all the time, and sometimes a story doesn't need to go any further, or it should just be allowed to settle for the public. I think in some cases we don't need so many news items, but rather a few that are well-developed over several days. That would allow us to understand them better and give them more impact when we report them, instead of these quick ones. Like, this politician said this, that one said that. After three days, people don't even remember what we were talking about, because we're bombarded with so much information that it's impossible to retain what really matters.

(Journalist no. 4; Radio station no. 4, private)

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Another major concern is the increasing intrusion of disinformation and the audience's confusion between journalistic content and opinionated or manipulated messages on social media.

With social media, with... with disinformation, fake news, etc., I think we're no longer being taken seriously, to put it one way. And... I don't know, I mean... I don't know what else we could do to be believed more than someone who picks up a phone, records themselves, and says whatever. But I do think, in a way, we're being trivialized. Still, I also believe people turn to traditional, mainstream media to verify that information.

*(Journalist no. 1; Radio station no. 1, private)

Despite these challenges, the journalists insist on radio's social responsibility. While most reject political activism in journalism, they affirm its potential as a vehicle for social transformation, especially in the defense of equality and human rights

Political activism, no. But for other causes... Feminist activism, for example, or LGBTBI activism, I think yes, and I think it's necessary for causes that are... In the end, we should all want, every journalist should want a more equal world, where there's no gender pay gap, where my male colleague doesn't earn more than me just for being a man, or ultimately, where we all want a world without LGBTBI violence. So I think when it comes to social and human rights issues, activism is possible and necessary. But for other topics, like political ones, I think it gets a bit more complicated.

(Journalist no. 13; Radio station no. 6, public)

5. The feminine and feminist perspective on the issues

The interviewees consistently advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective in both the selection and treatment of news topics. They report having to justify their proposals more thoroughly than their male colleagues when suggesting content they consider important. Most agree that women journalists tend to approach reality differently, with heightened sensitivity to social and gender-related issues.

Topics with a gender perspective that perhaps weren't addressed before, maybe because there weren't enough women in the newsroom. (...) This gender perspective can help identify issues that have traditionally been pushed into the background, and also influence the way news is produced.

(Journalist no. 1; Radio station no. 1, private)

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

This perspective is particularly evident in the coverage of gender-based violence and related issues. The journalists describe a differentiated, more careful approach, rooted in shared experiences and greater personal involvement.

(...) We are more sensitive to the issue of gender-based violence, not to say that men aren't, but I do think we look at it from a perspective that affects us personally. (...) Sometimes we focus on different people, on those who have been more directly affected by gender-based violence or sexual abuse, and we approach it more carefully. I'm not saying men don't do this, but I really believe there is a feminine perspective on this. (Journalist no. 13; Radio station no. 6, public)

In a professional environment that still exhibits gender biases, the interviewees often feel compelled to exceed standards of accuracy and rigor, particularly when covering topics traditionally considered male-dominated, such as sports.

I feel like if we frame it differently, it has to be at a level of perfection. (...) But at the beginning, when I was explaining something, preparing a topic, working on background material, for example, I had to make absolutely sure that everything I said made sense and was 100% accurate. Because I don't know, maybe it's those micro-misogynies we internalize just by existing... Being a girl talking about football, I felt I had to make it much clearer to everyone that I knew what I was talking about. Because there would always be some level of distrust. (Journalist no. 17; Radio station no. 5, public)

6.- Young people do not listen to traditional radio, but they do consume radio content

Radio reaches young audiences, but not through traditional channels. Social media, podcasts, and digital platforms are key to delivering radio content to new audiences. The interviewees question what will happen if a habit of listening is not cultivated among young people now.

Young people don't really listen to live radio. So, something needs to be rethought here, because they do listen to a lot of podcasts and a lot of content, how to put it... a lot of repackaged content, maybe. I get the feeling they don't listen much to news bulletins. Nor to talk shows or anything like that. They listen to interviews with people they're interested in, or well-produced investigative reports or true crime series, but a political analysis roundtable, not so much, I think. So I believe that the audience we are now, as young people, might not have the habit of listening to radio in a few years, and therefore, consumption needs to be approached differently. I think this is quite a cross-cutting issue across all stations, both in Catalonia and Spain, and that there needs to be a shift in focus, and everyone needs to step up their game on social media. (Journalist no. 8; Radio station no. 4, private)

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Therefore, most believe that in order to reach younger audiences, radio must increase its presence on social media platforms. This requires working with a clear strategy.

7.- Negative perceptions of the job

The journalists express widespread worry about the professional intrusion they denounce. Another major concern involves working conditions: low salaries, instability, heavy workloads, and lack of recognition. Nearly half of the women in the study, despite sharing housing, are able to live on their current income. Journalists working at public broadcasters are recognized as being better paid. Freelancers are losing purchasing power. The two journalists with internship contracts receive no financial compensation. Eleven journalists from the four private stations consider themselves poorly or underpaid relative to the level of dedication and demands of their roles in their jobs.

In two of the private stations included in the study, the lack of human resources leads, according to the interviewees, to production routines that revolve almost entirely around press offices and press conferences. 80% of the interviewees believe that this trend will increase in the future, impacting the types of stories covered on the radio.

8.- Management and gender

They observe that there are very few women in leadership positions in mainstream radio and believe that their generation will occupy these roles confidently. In some cases (a minority), they would accept such a position today. In others (the majority), they do not yet feel ready, but believe they will be in the near future.

I think we're increasingly ready. And it's not just about being prepared because, as I said, I believe my colleagues who are 30 years older than me are also ready to take on those roles. But I think it's about awareness: like, hey, I also want to lead, or I want to hold a position of power, or I want to share that power with you. And I think there's a generational gap between my colleagues and me, not that they don't want it, but maybe they wouldn't dare to say it. There will come a time when my colleagues and I will say: 'Hey, wait a minute, what about us?' It's really hard to do, but I think that's the big difference. It's not that they're not capable, far from it, but I think we are capable and we have this mindset of: 'Hey, we exist too, and we also want these roles.' Yes. (Journalist no. 2; Radio station no. 3, private)

While sharing an interest in management, most are aware that achieving it will not be easy.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

I think we're more than ready. Now, whether they see it... that's more complicated, because whenever a man comes along, he often gets ahead of a woman or has more opportunities to reach a position or get better conditions. But I think we're just as capable, or even more so, than they are. (Journalist no. 4; Radio station no. 4, private)

Figure 2 presents the journalists' preferences regarding the management of radio companies, content departments, or programmes, or having the ability to decide on the topics covered in their own shows. In this regard, most of the women interviewed expressed a desire to have greater decision-making power within the programmes they work on.

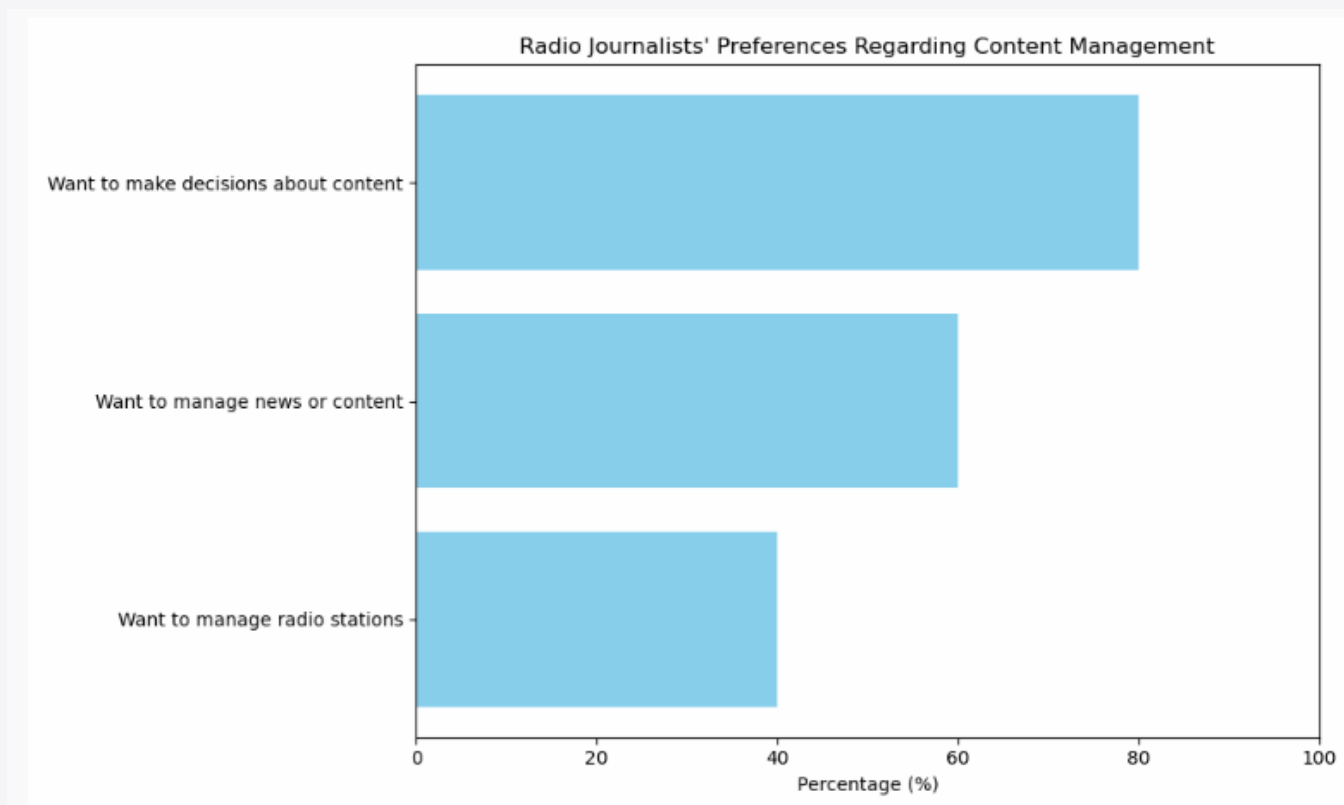


Figure 2. Ready for management: preferences. Source: own elaboration

9.- Work-life balance is a challenge

The difficulty of achieving work-life balance is a recurring topic. The journalists believe that the system forces them to choose between personal life and professional career, and they see motherhood as an obstacle that is not collectively acknowledged. Certain ideas related to this issue have become normalized, such as: "Journalism is a very demanding job and very difficult to combine with personal life," or "There's a real lack of policies to make reconciliation possible." They believe this is an issue that affects both men and women. "When you try to reconcile, you realize you don't have time to delve into topics the way you'd like to." This perception is shared by employees in both public and private radio stations.

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

I'm 27 years old, it's not such a crazy age to be thinking about starting a family, but it is, considering my schedule, you know what I mean? I mean, if I start at 10:00 and finish at 7:00... I mean, it would be impossible. It's practically impossible for me to even go to the gym, so just imagine having a child.(Journalist no. 1; Radio station no. 1, private)

10.- Changes they would make in their radio stations

The interviewees suggest slowing down production routines, increasing investment and technological agility, implementing changes in corporate culture (with more focus on a gender perspective), and adapting audiovisual formats to be broadcast on social media. This means using new storytelling approaches, less informationally dense, shorter, and with language closer to that of social platforms. They want more innovation without losing the essence of radio.

Well, maybe not losing the essence, right? You know what I mean? Because I think there's a real risk of... like I said, right? That at some point, a station might prioritize, well, social media, one-minute clips, short and easy-to-consume content... so I'd say, seeing how things are evolving, we really need to keep the essence of Radio. Always Radio. (Journalist no. 15; Radio station no. 3, private)

They demand to be heard and call for the issue of job insecurity in the sector to be addressed so that the future may be less precarious.

Well, I think we definitely need more people because I don't think we can manage everything with the staff we have. For example, I do the society section all by myself!! It's unmanageable for one single person. So, more staff, more resources, better pay, a schedule that would allow for better work-life balance. (...) In fact, I think... it will all continue to be a bit precarious.(Journalist no. 1; Radio station no. 1, private)

Discussion

Although the women who participated in this study do not constitute a statistically representative sample, nor do they act as official spokespersons for their respective radio stations, the convergence of their perspectives offers a compelling and realistic snapshot of the current state of generalist radio. Their reflections also provide valuable insight into how the medium is perceived and envisioned by feminine journalists under the age of 30. This aligns with the central aim of the research: to explore how female radio journalist of Generation Z engage with and imagine the evolution of generalist radio (non-local).

The findings reveal a notable degree of alignment in participants' perceptions, despite the diversity of the Catalan radio landscape in terms of ownership structures, editorial orientations, and resource availability. This convergence transcends institutional affiliations and employment conditions. Whether

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

employed in public or private broadcasters, participants articulated strikingly similar views regarding both the present and future of this media. The consistency of their responses across key thematic areas, despite the fact that they did not know one another, suggests the presence of a shared generational consciousness. This observation resonates with Mannheim's (1952) theory of generational unity, which posits that common historical and social experiences can shape a collective outlook among members of the same age cohort.

One particularly silent topic is the strong identification of these young women with radio as a sound-based medium. While they acknowledge the growing importance of audiovisual content, approximately half of the participants expressed ambivalence or dissatisfaction with this shift. They were concerned that the digital transition risks undermining the traditional strengths of radio. Participants recognize the strategic necessity of adapting to social media and visual platforms in order to engage younger audiences, yet they voice concern that such transformations may erode the distinctive qualities of radio journalism if the medium becomes overly visual or subordinated to the logic of storytelling of digital platforms. For these journalists, the essence of radio lies in the craft of sound storytelling, investigative depth, and the intimate connection fostered through the human voice, elements they fear may be compromised.

Moreover, their reflections align with the broader concerns about the precarisation of journalism and the emotional toll of digital acceleration, as discussed by Fanals (2021) and Ramírez (2023). The tension between innovation and continuity is not merely technological but also deeply cultural and professional, shaped by gendered experiences and generational expectations.

Conclusion

This study confirms that young women journalists working in Catalonia's general-interest radio sector hold a critical yet constructive view of this media, which they defend with conviction. They aspire to play an active role in shaping its future, but emphasize the need for institutional support and trust to consider a long-term career in radio as viable, an aspiration that many currently regard as unrealistic. These findings are consistent with Espinosa-Mirabet, Puntí, and Serra (2024), who highlight the persistent structural barriers that hinder women's professional advancement in radio stations as March (2024) was gathered from participants in a roundtable discussion on women and radio.

Participants underscore that without effective work-life balance policies, achieving career sustainability will remain highly challenging. They do not express this from a feminist perspective, but rather thinking that work-life balance should apply to everyone. Neither does their demand or concern for greater decision-making power over the content produced at their stations appear explicitly feminist, rather, it seems quite reasonable. As one of the interviewed journalists states, "if not now, when?" referring to the fact that we are living through a historically sensitive social moment, prepared to accept gender changes in leadership positions as normal. This perspective differs significantly from the conclusions drawn by Terol (2021), who

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

explains that women journalists often struggle to perceive and identify gender bias within journalistic work routines. The five-year gap between the collection of viewpoints may help explain this discrepancy. Additionally, the generational difference between Generation Z radio journalists and those from À Punt featured in Terol's study could also be a contributing factor. In fact, Terol (2021) notes that the youngest journalist she interviewed, aged 29 (Generation Z), is the one who reports the highest number of sexist behaviors and attitudes in her study.

Although some stations have implemented reconciliation plans, these are not consistently applied across workplaces. This inconsistency, along with perceived salary disparities, reflects broader patterns of inequality in the sector, as previously documented by Jiménez (2014) and Ruipérez (2018), who noted the underrepresentation of women in leadership and the persistence of gender pay gaps.

The journalists also call for structural reforms that would enable the integration of innovation, digital tools, and specialized technological roles to enhance newsroom efficiency and strengthen the digital presence of radio stations. However, they stress that such innovation must not come at the expense of radio's core identity.

Interviewed journalists reaffirm the essential role of radio as a bulwark against misinformation, emphasizing its responsibility to serve as a trustworthy source of journalism. They also stress the importance of adapting to new listening habits, particularly to engage younger audiences who primarily access content via social media platforms. Finally, they express deep concern about growing professional intrusion and the widespread lack of media literacy among certain segments of the public.

Considering Catalonia's economic and media landscape, particularly its high number of both local and non-local radio companies and its leading position in this regard, (Martí, 2015) the findings of this regional study could well be expanded by incorporating the perceptions of young female radio journalists from other parts of Spain, in order to obtain a more comprehensive overview. And why not, a similar study could be conducted in various European countries in order to draw more robust conclusions about how Generation Z female journalists perceive radio across Europe.

References

- Buitrago, Álex, Martín García, A., & Torres Ortiz, L. (2024). La alfabetización en inteligencia artificial: propuesta articulada de dimensiones e indicadores. *Communication Papers. Media Literacy and Gender Studies.*, 13(27), 118–139. https://doi.org/10.33115/udg_bib/cp.v13i27.23086
- ADC (2020) "La mujer en comunicación y RR.PP. en España'. 2ª edición del estudio. <https://www.asociacionadc.org/publicaciones-adc/>
- Balsebre Torroja, A. (2001). *Historia de la radio en España* (Vol. 1: 1874–1939). Madrid, España: Cátedra.
- Balsebre, A., & Fontova, R. (2018). *Las cartas de Elena Francis: Una educación sentimental bajo el franquismo*. Madrid: Cátedra
- Baykal, B. (2023) Mobile game preferences of Generation Z consumer profile. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374056481_MOBILE_GAME_PREFERENCES_OF_GENERATION_Z_CONSUMER_PROFILE
- Bages, Siscu. (2021) "Laura Fanals: "Els mitjans de trinxeres no ajuden a un debat tranquil sobre quin ha de ser el present i el futur de Catalunya" a: Catalunya Plural. <https://catalunyaplural.cat/ca/els-mitjans-de-trinxeres-no-ajuden-a-un-debat-tranquil-sobre-quin-ha-de-ser-el-present-i-el-futur-politic-de-catalunya/>
- Barrera López, B. (2018). Disciplinar desde las ondas. Proyecto y discurso radiofónico de la Sección Femenina durante la posguerra. *Alcores: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, (22), 47–64.
- Blanco Fajardo, S. (2018). La radio, compañera del hogar. Uso y consumo del espacio y el horario doméstico durante el primer franquismo (1939–1959). *Alcores: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, (22), 67–86.
- Chen, L., Martínez, R., & Singh, A. (2023). Understanding Generation Z: Media consumption and communication preferences compared to previous generations. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*. <https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/full-record/WOS:000961281500001>
- CONSELL DE L'AUDIOVISUAL DE CATALUNYA. Butlletí d'informació sobre l'audiovisual a Catalunya (BIAC). Núm. 26. Barcelona: CAC, gener del 2024. https://www.cac.cat/sites/default/files/2024-01/BIAC%2026_CA.pdf
- COL·LEGI DE PERIODISTES DE CATALUNYA. Els gabinets de comunicació Criteris de bones pràctiques professionals, 2013. https://cic.periodistes.cat/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/MANUAL_BONES_PRACTIQUES.pdf

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Díaz-Bravo, Laura; Torruco-García, Uri; Martínez-Hernández, Mildred y Varela-Ruiz, Margarita (2013) 'La entrevista, recurso flexible y dinámico'. *Investigación en Educación Medica* 2013;2(7):162-167

Espinosa Mirabet, Sílvia; Puntí Brun, Mónica i Serra Simón, Jordi (2024) *Les dones a la ràdio 100 anys després. Quaderns del CAC*, ISSN 1138-9761, ISSN-e 2014-2242, N°. 50, 2024 (Monogràfic: La ràdio: memòria, resiliència i transformació), pàgs. 19-30)

Espinosa-Mirabet, S. (2020). La radio: una historia en femenino. En B. Sánchez-Gutiérrez & I. Liberia Vayá (Coords.), *Aquelarre. La emancipación de las mujeres en la cultura de masas* (pp.102-119). Sevilla, España: Advook Editorial.

Espinosa Mirabet, S. (2018). De profesión, locutora de radio. Las voces femeninas de la radio española anteriores al franquismo. *Alcores: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, (22), 21-44

Espinosa, S. (2016). «En Femenino Y Singular: La Mujer En La Radio española Desde Los “felices años veinte” Hasta El Final De La Guerra Civil». *Arenal. Revista De Historia De Las Mujeres* 23 (1):5-34. <https://doi.org/10.30827/arenal.v23i1.4993>.

Espinosa, S. (2014): *Dones de ràdio*. Barcelona: Albertí editors

Espinosa-Mirabet, S. (2013). Cuando María Cinta Balagué radió el primer magazine. *En Historia y comunicación social*, Vol. 18. pp. 157-167

Espinosa Mirabet, S. (2012). “Las primeras locutoras y la historia de la radio. El caso de Cataluña, 1924-1939” en *ZER: revista de estudios de comunicación*. Vol.: 16. Núm.: 31. pp.109-127 . ISSN:1137-1102

Fanals Gubau, Laura. (2021) *Precarietat laboral i ètica periodística: una anàlisi de la relació entre condicions de treball i deontologia professional a Catalunya*. Tesis Doctoral. Universitat Pompeu Fabra. <http://hdl.handle.net/10803/670815>

Franquet, R. (1982) “Por un discurso no andocéntrico de los medios e comunicación” en *VVAA: el sexisme en la ciència*. Barcelona: UAB. pp.115-126

Franquet, R. (2001). *Història de la ràdio a Catalunya al segle XX: de la ràdio galena a la ràdio digital*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, Direcció General de Radiodifusió i Televisió. ISBN: 978-84-393-5450-5

Departament d'Universitats (2022). Generalitat de Catalunya. URL: <https://recercauniversitats.gencat.cat/ca/>

EGM, AIMC (2024) URL: https://www.aimc.es/aimc-c0nt3nt/uploads/2024/01/Marco_General_Medios_2024.pdf

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Jiménez, C. (2014) 'Sostre de vidre o de formigó?' Capçalera, URL:
<https://www.periodistes.cat/capcalera/article-465534-1-10-20170616.pdf>

Infoadex (2025) Estudio de la inversión publicitaria en España2024. URL:
<https://www.infoadex.es/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Estudio-InfoAdex-2024-Resumen.pdf>

Macharia, S. (2020) [co-ordinator of] WACC's Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) URL:
<https://waccglobal.org/research-on-gender-equality-in-the-news-needs-adequate-funding/>

Mannheim, K. (1952). The Problem of Generations. In P. Kecskemeti (Ed.), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (pp. 276-320). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Manrique Sabogal, W. (2025). Cómo las generaciones Z y alfa se convirtieron en las mejores aliadas de la lectura. *El País*. URL:
<https://elpais.com/cultura/2025-03-25/como-las-generaciones-z-y-alfa-se-convirtieron-en-las-mejores-aliadas-de-la-lectura.html>

March, Mercè. (2024)Amb veu de Dona: 90 anys de Ràdio Lleida. Taula Rodona
<https://cadenaser.com/cataluna/2024/03/01/mes-visibilitzacio-de-les-dones-en-tots-els-ambits-radio-lleida/>

Marugán Solís, F. y Martín Critikián, D. (2023). Redes Sociales y Generación Z. *Doxa Comunicación*, 36, pp. 381-399. <https://doi.org/10.31921/doxacom.n36a1707>

Martí-Martí, J.M.; Monclús-Blanco, B.; Gutiérrez-García, M.; Ribes, X. (2015). "La radio, modelo de negocio en transición: estrategias de oferta y de comercialización en el contexto digital". *Quaderns del CAC*, v. 41, n. 18, pp. 13-22.
https://www.cac.cat/pfw_files/cma/recerca/quaderns_cac/Q41_Marti_et_al_ES.pdf

Pérez Martínez, J.E. (2016). Mujeres en la radio española del siglo XX (1924–1989). *Arenal. Revista de Historia de las Mujeres*, 23(1), 35–58. URL:
<https://doi.org/10.30827/arenal.v23i1.4996>

Orús, A. (2020) 'Principales problemas de la profesión periodística por edad. España 2018' A Statista. URL:
<https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/864335/principales-problemas-de-la-profesion-periodistica-por-edad-espana/>

Ramírez, M. (2023) Las directoras que faltan en España. URL:
<https://www.cuadernosdeperiodistas.com/las-directoras-que-faltan-en-espana/>

Ruipérez Moslares, M. (2018) Estudio sobre la presencia de las mujeres en la prensa Madrid: Consejería de Políticas Sociales y Familia. Dirección General de la Mujer

Generation Z's Feminine Radio Journalist: The Future of Talk Radio

Sindicat de Periodistes de Catalunya (2022) Radiografia dels mitjans de comunicació a Catalunya. URL:

https://sindicatperiodistes.cat/wpcontent/uploads/2023/02/Radiografia_mitjans_Informe_finalOK.pdf

Shliakhovchuk, E., Oliynyk, R. and Muñoz García, A. (2021) 'Gen Zers' video game preferences and learning outcomes: toward designing better games', *Int. J. Technology Enhanced Learning*, Vol. 13, No. 2, pp.208–236.

https://www.academia.edu/50977448/Gen_Zers_video_game_preferences_and_learning_outcomes_toward_designing_better_games?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Terol Trenzano, E. (2021). *Gènere i cultura periodística. Experiències de dones periodistes en la redacció d'À Punt* [Treball Final de Màster, Universitat de Barcelona]. Dipòsit Digital de la Universitat de Barcelona. URL:

<https://hdl.handle.net/2445/182824>

Tirocchi, S. (2024). Generation Z, values, and media: From influencers to BeReal, between visibility and authenticity. *Frontiers in Sociology*. URL

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1304093>

World Journalism Education Council, WJEC (2023). 'Journalistic roles, values and qualifications in the network era. How journalism educators around the globe view the future of journalism' URL:

<https://wjec.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/WJEC-survey-.pdf>



Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

Received: 22 May 2025; **Accepted:** 07 November 2025

Ege Göksu, M.A.

Media and Cultural Studies, Istanbul Arel University, Istanbul, Türkiye

egegoksu@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0000-7814-6403

CONTENT TABLE

- Abstract & Introduction
- The Politics of Space as an Instrument of Domination
 - Table-1 Spatial Categories as Conceptualized by Harvey and Lefebvre1
- The Cinematographic Space as a Stage for the Power Struggle
- The Transformation of the Subject through Spatial Arrangement
- Spatial Composition and Subject Construction in the Context of Domination Relations in *Nasipse Adayız*
 - Table-2. Dr. Kemal's Relationship with Space at the Beginning of the Candidacy Process
 - Table-3. Dr. Kemal's Relationship with Space After the Rejection of His Candidacy
- Conclusion
- References

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

Abstract

This study examines the spatial representations of political domination and the transformation of the individual within these spaces through Ercan Kesal's 2020 film *Nasipse Adayız*. The film reveals how space, within a political context where representation is increasingly replaced by networks of relationships and pragmatic interests, and where public space is instrumentalized, becomes both a symbol of power and an active instrument in its construction. This transformation becomes particularly visible through Dr. Kemal's failed attempts to establish meaningful relationships with various spaces; thus, politics is depicted as a structure that has evolved into a superficial performance dictated by personal interests. The relationship Dr. Kemal builds with space is analyzed through Henri Lefebvre's theory of the "production of space" and David Harvey's spatial categories. In line with this theoretical framework, Dr. Kemal's repeated failures to establish hierarchy cause his relationship with space to shift toward the dimensions of Spatial Practices and Relative Space. Consequently, space is reproduced through everyday practices while simultaneously acquiring different meanings and qualities depending on the observer and context. Since the film focuses primarily on power relations, it makes visible the hierarchies between characters through spaces that are constantly being transformed by interactions.

Keywords: Production of Space, Power, Social Institutions, Turkish Cinema, Representation of Space in Cinema, Politics of Space

Introduction

In Turkey, since the beginning of the modernization project, space has been a fundamental domain where political powers have embodied their ideologies, shaped society, and consolidated their legitimacy. Therefore, understanding the relationship between space and politics as depicted in the film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) necessitates a consideration of Turkey's historical and social context. With the proclamation of the Republic, the construction of the capital city, Ankara, was a symbolic spatial project that reflected the Western, modern, and secular identity of the nation-state. Wide avenues, geometrically planned neighborhoods, and monumental public buildings were an inscription of an ideological vision onto space a vision that rejected the old (the Ottoman Empire) and targeted a new social order. During this period, space was the clearest arena in which the desire of the ruling power to design society in a top-down manner was manifested.

The intense wave of rural-to-urban migration, which began in the 1950s, led to the emergence of new and "informal" spaces on the peripheries of this planned modernization project: *gecekondu* (squatter settlements). Initially seen as a housing problem, the *gecekondu* districts gradually transformed into one of the most dynamic arenas of politics. These areas, holding significant voting potential for political parties, became the site of a pragmatic bargaining relationship between the ruling power and the citizens, conducted through promises such as title deed allocations, zoning amnesties, and infrastructure services. As Tanıl Bora has also pointed out, this situation created a ground where politics became intertwined with

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

daily life and the most basic needs, and where populist discourses found their expression through space. The land negotiations and zoning issues in *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) can be read as a contemporary reflection of this historical process. Indeed, studies indicating that politics in Turkey is shaped by the center-periphery tension and that populist discourse gains strength through its pragmatic relationship with voters in these peripheries point to the historical origins of the bargaining environment depicted in the film (Bora, 2017).

In the post-1980 period, with Turkey's integration into neoliberal policies, urban space became the center of capital accumulation and rent. As explained by David Harvey's concept of the "spatial fix," cities were transformed into investment vehicles, reshaped by shopping malls, luxury housing projects, and urban renewal applications. In this process, as public spaces diminished, urban space became increasingly fragmented, and the segregation between social classes deepened. The ruling power, through tools like large-scale infrastructure projects and TOKİ (Housing Development Administration), not only created economic value by transforming space but also showcased its own political power and vision to society through these massive structures. This situation aligns with analyses suggesting that the state in Turkey is shaped by the relationships between bureaucratic elites and the developing bourgeoisie, and that urban rent is one of the fundamental dynamics of this inter-class struggle (Keyder, 2022).

It is precisely against this complex historical backdrop that *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) is situated. The film reveals a political atmosphere where, on the one hand, the Republic's modernist spatial ideals have been surpassed, and on the other, the politics of bargaining born from the *gecekondu* has become intertwined with a rent economy, all managed by a neoliberal 'market' logic. The spaces experienced by Dr. Kemal during his candidacy process bear the traces of these three historical layers (modernist, populist, and neoliberal) and demonstrate how his quest for power becomes meaningless within these complex spatial networks. This section, before proceeding to the film's analysis, aims to establish that the spaces in the film are not merely backdrops but are, in fact, vibrant arenas that produce and reflect the very politics of Turkey.

As a constructed domain, space is not merely a physical entity; it is also a form of social and political construction. The way a space is designed, its intended use, and its aesthetic configurations often serve an ideological framework. Spaces function as instruments that direct individual behavior, regulate social relations, and reinforce power structures. For instance, a space created by parents for a child raised in a sterile environment is designed to block external threats, while a space not shaped by a protective mindset leaves the child open to various social influences. Such a space accommodates potential threats in an "unforeseen yet controlled" manner. Both types of space are artificial and inorganic configurations, shaped through a political lens. Although these spaces may appear to be neutral, they typically reproduce and legitimize a particular form of power. While concealing the mechanisms of authority in the background, they present values such as safety, comfort, or public benefit in the foreground to guide individuals. In doing so, they

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

provide a fundamental ground for analyzing the relationship between the individual and power.

Similarly, power relations become overtly visible in public spaces designed for communal use. While public spaces may seem to be organized on the basis of collective benefit, they often contain mechanisms of guidance—or even coercion—within them. This allows public space to function as an ideological instrument. For instance, the 2021 reconstruction of the Atatürk Cultural Center in Istanbul's Taksim Square, along with the creation of a “cultural route” that directs pedestrian traffic from Nişantaşı through the interior of the complex, illustrates how a seemingly public space is in fact ideologically designed. In this context, pre-existing social habits were restructured, and citizens' movement flows were redirected in ways that appeared unplanned, yet served specific ideological objectives. These spatial interventions not only reshape urban experiences but also reform individuals' social practices and habits.

This reveals the transformative impact of modernization on the relationship between individuals and space. As Marshall Berman suggests, modernization promises constant change, development, and renewal while simultaneously uprooting individuals and detaching them from their existential foundations (Berman, 1982). Estrangement from tradition, loss of belonging, and the erosion of continuity are especially prominent in modern cities. This transformation reshapes the individual's relationship with space not only on a physical level but also on psychological and social dimensions. The alienating effect of modern cities illustrates that space is not merely a domain of habitation, but also a stage for social relations, power dynamics, and struggles over identity. As Walter Benjamin also emphasized, individuals express themselves not only through verbal narratives but also through the spatial arrangements they inhabit, experience, and engage with (Benjamin, 2024).

In this context, modern space offers a setting in which individual identities are constructed and social conflicts are shaped. In modern cities, the flow of daily life is surrounded by spatial arrangements that directly impact individuals' social positions and relationships. These spaces function on the one hand as tools of power that pressure individuals to conform to certain norms, and on the other hand, as environments through which individuals can develop identities based on their interaction with such arrangements. Therefore, modern art forms such as cinema serve as powerful means to make these relationships visible and to examine them through a critical lens. Visual narratives reconstruct the political and cultural meanings of space, offering audiences the opportunity to question social dynamics. Particularly in cinema, due to its capacity to visualize the effects of space on individuals, power relations, and social transformations, space emerges as one of the most effective domains in representing its political nature. Just as the transformation of urban space reflects the domination mechanisms of political power today, cinema can reveal forms of social domination through spatial representations.

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

Films that explore how power is structured within social institutions, the family, the state, or public life, do not treat space merely as a background setting. They also open up a crucial terrain for understanding how individuals are included within these structures, how spatial arrangements shape them, and under what conditions they develop obedience or resistance. Such films provide a critical foundation for comprehending how space encompasses, directs, and transforms characters.

In this regard, the film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020), which will be analyzed in this study, offers a suitable framework to examine how space is used as an instrument in the representation of power and how the individual is reconstructed within these spaces. The film opens a discussion about the positioning of the individual within the modern political system, the power-imbued structure of politics, and the role of space as a carrier of this structure. The film's central premise revolves around the contemporary reality in which politics has lost its function of generating public value and benefit, becoming increasingly dominated by pragmatic personal interests. The main objective of this study is to examine how politics shapes individuals through spatial constructs and how political power is consolidated through space. The spatial arrangements in the film will be analyzed through the theoretical lenses of Henri Lefebvre's "production of space" and David Harvey's "reproduction of capitalist space," with an emphasis on the social and political functions of space in the construction of identity.

In addition to the space-oriented theories of Lefebvre and Harvey, Dr. Kemal's struggle in the political arena can also be read through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and "capital." From this perspective, politics is a field of power that different actors enter with the social and symbolic capital they possess. Dr. Kemal's efforts to exist in this field and his failed attempts to increase his capital through spaces add another dimension to understanding the hierarchical structures and power relations in the film.

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the spatial arrangement in the film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) based on the theoretical approaches of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, and thereby to thoroughly examine the spatial representations of the desire for political domination in Turkey and the transformation of the subject in this process. In line with this general aim, the article primarily sets as its main question how the film represents the desire for political power and the construction of the subject in Turkey through its spatial arrangement. To illuminate this fundamental question, answers are sought for sub-questions such as: how spaces like the party headquarters and luxury restaurants reflect political and social hierarchies; what role Dr. Kemal's failed relationships with these spaces play in revealing the pragmatic nature of politics; and finally, how the film's spatial arrangement makes visible the efforts of political actors to establish their fields of power.

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

In Turkish cinema, space has frequently been used as an important tool for social and political critique. Studies focusing particularly on the transformation of urban spaces and its effects on individuals provide a significant ground for understanding the relationship between cinema and social reality (For an example, see Köse, 2021). In addition to this general framework, specific academic studies on the film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) are also available. For instance, Selami İnce (2025), by examining the film through a sociological and cultural analysis of the "Mitläufer" character Dr. Kemal, focuses on the character's political and ethical dilemmas. Distinct from İnce's character-focused analysis, our study aims to offer an original contribution to the literature by revealing the spatial dynamics of these dilemmas and how this process unfolds in light of the theories of Lefebvre and Harvey (Alinia and Gürkan, 2025)

In the literature on Turkish cinema, *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) has been the subject of various studies, particularly those addressing the ethical and pragmatic dimensions of politics. These studies generally center on the ethics of a politician through the character of Dr. Kemal (İnce, 2025) or the critical dialogue the film establishes with the current political atmosphere in Turkey. While the existing literature successfully analyzes the film's political discourse at the level of character and plot, the primary purpose and original contribution of this study is to demonstrate how this political critique is constructed through a spatial language. In other words, this article aims to add a new analytical dimension to the field by examining, through the theoretical lens of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey, how the desire for political power and the transformation of the subject are represented not only through dialogues or character actions but through the very arrangement of space itself.

In this study, the theoretical case study method, one of the qualitative research designs, has been adopted. The film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020), designated as the unit of analysis, was examined using the descriptive analysis technique. During the analysis process, the use of space in critical scenes was systematically coded through Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad and David Harvey's categories of space. This theoretical "mapping" process aims to uncover the ideological layers of meaning beneath the spatial arrangement and the film's critical discourse. It should be noted that this analysis focuses not on the literary work from which the film was adapted, but on the unique visual language of cinema itself.

The Politics of Space as an Instrument of Domination

Space is not merely a physical entity, but rather a dynamic field of production in which social, political, and economic processes intersect. Thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey have demonstrated that space is a construct shaped by social relations and continuously reproduced. They reveal how spatial relationships are inherently intertwined with mechanisms of power. Lefebvre argues that space functions as "a kind of map" that bears the traces of power relations and social processes (Lefebvre, 1991). Every space contains embedded social relations and operates as a cartography of those interactions.

Representations of space are always infused with relative and transforming knowledge—a hybrid of learned perceptions and ideology. Therefore, although these representations may be reconsidered, they maintain a form of objectivity. Are they correct or incorrect? The question does not always yield a defined answer. Is a perspective true or false? Representations of space, being inherently abstract, infiltrate social and political practices. However, the relationships formed between people and objects within the represented space inevitably fracture these representations due to their lack of cohesion. Rather than being meticulously designed, representational spaces are lived experiences that require neither consistency nor continuity. These spaces, shaped by imagination and symbolism, are rooted in history—the history of a people and each individual who belongs to that community. Ethnologists, anthropologists, and psychoanalysts, whether consciously or not, study such representational spaces, yet they often fail to confront them with other coexisting, interrelated, or overlapping spatial representations—and, notably, tend to neglect spatial practice itself (Lefebvre, 2014, p. 70).

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre classifies space into three conceptual levels: Representations of Space, Spaces of Representation, and Spatial Practices. This triadic framework demonstrates that space is not only a physical object, but also a product shaped by ideologies, political systems, and social structures. Representations of Space refers to spaces structured directly by power and hierarchy—spaces planned and regulated by the state and capital. Examples include governmental institutions, military zones, and urban spaces shaped through city planning. These spaces reinforce social order and manifest a specific ideological worldview. In contrast, Spaces of Representation are the lived, experienced spaces imbued with symbolic meaning by individuals. These spaces emerge independently of official ideology and are shaped by everyday life, contributing to personal identity formation. Examples include informal neighborhoods, streets, protest grounds, or sites marked by personal memory. Spatial Practices refer to the processes through which individuals reproduce space via their daily interactions. These practices reveal how society conceptualizes space and how power relations influence such perceptions (Lefebvre, 2014).

David Harvey, in *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, expands this triad by proposing a spatial framework composed of Absolute Space, Relative Space, and Relational Space. According to Harvey, space is not merely a physical realm but is also shaped by social and economic forces. Absolute Space refers to space that is fixed and physically defined—such as buildings, national borders, or zones of property. These types of space form the foundation for property rights, legal boundaries, and institutional control. Relative Space, on the other hand, is a construct that changes according to the observer's position and socio-political context. For example, how a city center is perceived by different communities or how a district transforms based on economic activity exemplifies the relative nature of space. Relational Space

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

emphasizes that space is embedded within and transformed by social, economic, and political processes. It is not merely defined by physicality or relationships between objects but evolves through those very interactions. Relational space investigates how individuals experience space within a given social context. Thus, space is continuously reproduced through social interaction and shaped by lived spatial experience. Examples such as urban redevelopment projects or refugee movements illustrate the relational nature of space (Harvey, 2006).

Harvey’s spatial analyses help illuminate how capitalist modes of production materialize spatially. In capitalist systems, space is not only an instrument for organizing economic activity but also a mechanism for reinforcing social hierarchies and regulating individuals through spatial arrangements. In this way, social behavior and lifestyles are indirectly controlled through spatial planning. Urban redevelopment projects are among the most tangible examples that reveal how class distinctions are spatially reproduced. In cities, the spatial separation between high-income residential zones and low-income neighborhoods directly reflects the capitalist system’s influence over space. More broadly, the “relative” dimension of all definitions of space becomes reinterpreted within power structures shifting, over the course of a narrative, from one point of meaning to another.

| ↓Harvey Lefebvre → | Spatial Practices | Representations of Space | Spaces of Representation |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Absolute Space | | | |
| Relative Space | | | |
| Relational Space | | | |

Table-1 Spatial Categories as Conceptualized by Harvey and Lefebvre

The Cinematographic Space as a Stage for the Power Struggle

The relationship between space and power in cinema is often a prominent theme. The cinematic representation of a city, structure, or natural area reveals the power dynamics associated with that space. As Michel Foucault points out in his works *Heterotopia* and *Discipline and Punish*, power does not merely shape space but also observes and controls individuals through these spaces (Foucault, 2019). In this context, space is not just a physical environment but a social construct that shapes individuals' behaviors, positions, and perceptions. When approached from this perspective, space in cinema is not merely a narrative tool; it also emerges as a visual and semantic element that materializes power relations.

When examining the space-power relationship in cinema through Foucault's concept of disciplinary society, it becomes clear that power does not operate solely through legal and political apparatuses. In disciplinary systems, power exerts direct control over individuals’ bodies and actions, primarily through spaces. These spaces manifest in cinema as environments that limit the freedom of characters, observe

¹ This table, which visualizes the concepts developed by Lefebvre and Harvey, will be used in the spatial analysis of films.

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

them, and force them to conform to societal norms. This visual strategy aligns precisely with Foucault's notions of surveillance and discipline.

The symbolic meanings of space in cinema also hold significant importance in deepening our understanding of these space-power relations. These spatial constructs not only demonstrate the physical but also the ideological nature of space. In this regard, Foucault's concept of heterotopia provides a functional framework to understand the spatial counterparts of non-normative experiences (Foucault, 2019).

David Harvey's theories on urbanism and capitalism also offer crucial insights into how spatial representations in cinema are shaped by power relations (Harvey, 2006). The capitalist system utilizes space not only as a medium for regulating economic activities but also as a tool for reinforcing social hierarchies and forcing individuals into specific spatial arrangements. Cinema makes this reality visible by demonstrating how cities are reproduced and how, within this process, class differences become spatially divided. This cinematic choice directly correlates with Harvey's theoretical framework emphasizing spatial injustice in capitalist cities.

In this context, Henri Lefebvre's concept of relational space offers a complementary perspective for understanding the social meanings of space, power relations, and the multilayered connections space has with individuals (Lefebvre, 1991). Relational space encompasses not only the physical location we inhabit but also the social meanings assigned to it and the emotional relationships individuals develop with these meanings. Cinematic uses of space in this way show how characters are situated in space based on their identities, roles, and social positions, and how this positioning creates meaning.

Theoretical tools provided by thinkers like Foucault, Lefebvre, and Harvey offer essential resources for understanding how space in cinema undertakes ideological and narrative functions. In this way, cinema transforms space from a physical setting into a multilayered narrative domain where phenomena like power, class, surveillance, and social structures gain visibility.

Alongside sociological theories of space, film studies also emphasize that space is not merely a backdrop but a constitutive element of the narrative itself. In cinema, space is an active element that reflects the psychology of characters, visualizes social hierarchies, and produces ideological meanings. Analyses of *mise-en-scène* (staging), in particular, examine how a space acquires meaning through cinematographic tools such as lighting, color, set design, and composition (Bordwell & Thompson, 2011). This study aims to analyze the spaces in *Nasipse Adayız* by building a bridge between Lefebvre's abstract theory of space and the concrete visual language of cinema, focusing on 'how' space produces meaning.

The Transformation of the Subject through Spatial Arrangement

In cinematic narrative, space is not merely a place where characters are physically located, but a powerful narrative tool reflecting their psychological and social transformations. The use of space plays a central role in revealing characters' social positions, identity conflicts, and inner worlds. Through visual elements such as *mise-en-scène*, set design, lighting, color, and costumes, space not only provides an aesthetic ground but also conveys ideological and class-based messages. The way social structures are built and the positions of characters within these structures are concretized through these visual components. Camera movements, angles, and shots are fundamental visual tools in shaping the impact of space on characters in cinema. Spatial narration allows for the visualization of not only physical environments but also the psychological states and social positions of characters. In this context, characters' reactions to space and the transformations they undergo in response constitute one of the strongest representations of subjective change in cinema.

On the other hand, David Harvey's concept of "time-space compression" emphasizes the experiential dimension of space in these narratives; space is not only a physical context but also a level where psychological pressures intensify and rapidly changing social dynamics are reflected. In modern urban narratives, as individuals are forced to adapt to rapidly changing spaces, this rhythm becomes a pressure point that triggers the transformation of characters. In this context, space in cinema becomes both the cause and the reflection of the character's psychological dissolution, identity search, and resistance to social pressures.

Cinema, through the spatial experiences of characters, not only makes visible the individual's inner world but also the social structure and ideological relations. The language of the camera, space design, and cinematographic details transform into the visual expression of the psychological, social, and emotional transformation the character undergoes. Lefebvre's concept of relational space and Harvey's time-space analyses provide essential theoretical tools for decoding the social dynamics underlying this visual narration. In this context, space is not merely a backdrop; through cinema, it becomes both the carrier and the determinant of the subject's transformation journey.

Spatial Composition and Subject Construction in the Context of Domination Relations in *Nasipse Adayız*;

The 2020 film *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) focuses on Dr. Kemal Güner's candidacy for the position of mayor in a district of Istanbul. Leading a calm life, Kemal unexpectedly finds himself in the midst of a complex and challenging political race. The bureaucratic obstacles and personal conflicts he faces during his candidacy are presented through a series of tragicomic events. The film sheds light on Turkey's local political dynamics, how individuals position themselves in public spaces, and how power relations are shaped through spatial arrangements. The spaces Dr. Kemal occupies throughout his political journey function as symbols reflecting his political identity and social status. These spaces make visible the

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

conflicts between Kemal's personal goals and the societal pressures he faces.

The patronage system and hierarchical order in Turkish politics are deeply explored in the film. Kemal's efforts to gain the support of powerful figures to rise in the political arena demonstrate how politics is shaped through personal interests. In this process, Kemal learns how ruthless and coercive power can be. The film's spatial design, which questions how this system transforms and manipulates individuals' ideals, symbolizes Kemal's political rise and fall. In the film, spaces function as symbols of power, while the relationships between characters reveal the effects of these structures on individuals. Kemal's efforts to access political power, his personal journey, and the obstacles he faces form the core dynamics of the narrative. Politicians' homes and offices, Kemal's house, meeting rooms, and public spaces serve as important reference points for analyzing the political context of the spaces in the film.

The homes and offices of politicians in the film function as symbolic centers of power and authority. These spaces are essential for understanding the world of those who hold power and how they operate. Specifically, the luxurious and ostentatious décor symbolizes the desire for power and prestige. Kemal's presence in these spaces can be viewed as part of his effort to attain power. Dr. Kemal's home reflects his inner world and his presence in the political arena. The simple, ordinary decoration of the house reflects the conflict between Kemal's ability to exist in the political world and his true identity. This space mirrors the vulnerable and fragile aspects of Kemal's personality, as he faces internal conflicts in his pursuit of power. While the home represents a space where he feels safe from the outside world, it is not a sufficient refuge to deal with the harsh realities of political struggle. Meeting rooms, municipal buildings, and other official spaces are places where political power and authority are concretized. Scenes in these spaces express Kemal's efforts to establish himself in the political arena, his relationships with powerful figures, and the disappointments he experiences. The cold, distant, and hierarchical nature of official spaces represents the inaccessibility of power. Cities and public spaces, on the other hand, represent the obligation to be among the people and communicate with them. Kemal's visits to the streets, coffeehouses, and marketplaces demonstrate his efforts to connect with the public and establish himself as a politician. However, these spaces also reflect his fragility, alienation from society, and the difficulties in his political career.

The hierarchical spaces in the film can be analyzed in three main categories through the concepts of Lefebvre and Harvey: places such as coffeehouses, health centers, furniture stores (Sleep Center), prayer ceremonies, hotels, and wedding halls function as "Spatial Practices" and "Relational Spaces." These spaces are areas where social relations unfold, constantly transforming within the dynamics of daily life, and gaining meaning through social interaction. These places, where political relations are repeated and serve a particular purpose, turn into sites for vote-catching. Hospitals and streets can be defined as "Representations of Space" and "Relational Spaces." These spaces, which are shaped within the flow of daily life, do not directly dictate hierarchy but acquire meaning through social interactions.

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

Furthermore, Simge Wedding Hall, where Dr. Kemal Güner experiences some of his most significant moments, falls under both the “Representation of Space” and “Relational Space” categories. Constructed and controlled by power centers, this space gains different meanings depending on the observer's position and context. Similarly, the political party headquarters seen in the opening sequence of the film can also be considered as both a “Representation of Space” and a “Relative Space”; it is an area shaped by the ideological control mechanisms defined by dominant powers.

| ↓Harvey Lefebvre → | Spatial Practices | Representations of Space | Spaces of Represent ation |
|-------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Absolute Space | | | |
| Relative Space | | Political Party Headquarters in the Prologue | |
| Relational Space | Coffeehouse, Health Center, Sleep Center, Furniture Store, Prayer Ceremony, Hotel, Wedding Hall | Simge Wedding Hall | Hospital, Streets |

Table-2. Dr. Kemal's Relationship with Space at the Beginning of the Candidacy Process

In the later parts of the film, Dr. Kemal’s relationship with spaces gradually emphasizes his powerlessness. Witnessing people gambling in the back of the coffeehouse, being asked for dentures in response to a request for votes at the furniture store, exceeding the elevator’s capacity when trying to visit the party chairman at the hotel, his speech being ignored at the Simge Wedding Hall, being attacked by a former patient’s relative on the stairs after kissing the religious leader’s hand at the prayer meeting, and finally being punched by his driver on a street—all these events cause him to lose his power wherever he attempts to establish hierarchy. From this point on, all the spaces in the film become “Spatial Practices” and “Relative Spaces.” These spaces, which are constantly reproduced and acquire different meanings depending on the context, demonstrate that the character’s efforts to exist on the political stage result in failure. The film narrates power relations not through the hierarchy between individuals, but through the transformation of space. The film's spatial argument is reinforced not only by the choice of locations but also by a conscious cinematography, that is, through *mise-en-scène* (staging). For example, the hierarchy in the party headquarters is visualized with wide camera angles that show Dr. Kemal as small and ineffective within the space. The negotiations in luxury restaurants are supported by dim, high-contrast lighting that emphasizes the moral ambiguity. Similarly, the precarious and dynamic atmosphere of the *gecekondu* neighborhood is directly conveyed to the audience through the use of a handheld camera. Therefore, the

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

film's visual language adds an aesthetic layer that reinforces the theoretical meaning of the spaces.

| ↓Harvey Lefebvre → | Spatial Practices | Representations of Space | Spaces of Representation |
|-------------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Absolute Space | | | |
| Relative Space | | Coffeehouse, Health Center, Sleep Center, Furniture Store, Prayer Ceremony, Hotel, Wedding Hall, Simge Wedding Hall, Hospital, Streets | |
| Relational Space | Tailoring Workshop | | |

Table-3. Dr. Kemal's Relationship with Space After the Rejection of His Candidacy

Dr. Kemal's inability to control any space forms the core conflict of the narrative. In the final scene of the film, the character visits a pork restaurant located in the basement of a flag tailoring workshop. An old minister dining there tells him he can help. This space, which appears as a place where Dr. Kemal does not attempt to exert control, can be analyzed within the frameworks of “Spatial Practices” and “Relational Space.” This space, which is constantly reproduced and shaped by the changing nature of social relationships, represents the space the character has been trying to reach since the very first moments of the pre-candidacy process. However, ironically, unlike the spaces he has been trying to control and impose a hierarchical order on throughout the film, he forms a connection in this space, where he has no expectations, which ultimately helps him advance in politics. This scene, while exposing the contradictions of individual ambition and the pursuit of power, also reveals how unclear and unexpectedly the rules of political power operate.

Conclusion

In cinema, space is not merely a physical backdrop; as an integral component of storytelling, it plays a strategic role in conveying social and political messages. Spaces not only reflect the inner worlds of characters but also make visible their interactions with social structures and power relations. In this context, *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020), a film reflecting a period where individual idealism succumbs to political pragmatism, effectively demonstrates how the relationship between the individual and society is transformed through spaces. The film takes place in an environment where politics has become a tool for individuals to exploit, and social identities are reshaped around self-interests. Dr. Kemal Güner’s tragicomic candidacy process symbolizes a period in Turkish politics where the political landscape has become increasingly superficial and open to manipulation. In this political structure, spaces become witnesses and metaphors for this transformation.

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

The film offers a striking critique of the nature of local politics in Turkey, creating a suffocating feeling in the viewer. It not only makes visible the familiar small political calculations and the hypocrisy of politicians but also exposes the human weaknesses, desires, and mechanisms of pleasure that make this scene possible. The dream sequence in the opening of the film shows how deeply the representation of the political is intertwined with unconscious processes. From this point forward, the entire narrative becomes a text that progresses through symbols and repressed desires, much like the workings of dreams. Dr. Kemal's efforts to reach power are constantly interrupted by difficult and often humiliating spatial encounters with his own body and social environment. Spaces such as the wedding hall, prayer house, hotel elevator, or coffeehouse transcend mere representation, becoming symbolic planes that reveal the character's internal disintegration. Particularly moments like his inability to enter the elevator, his avoidance of his ex-wife's gaze while announcing his candidacy, or the physical conflict with his driver on the street in the scenes after he realizes he will not be selected as the candidate represent the failure of his desire for power and the unconscious tension created by this failure (Özmen, 2021).

The spaces in the film become tools that continuously redefine and transform Dr. Kemal's social status. His transition from personal space to public space reflects the individual's shaping by social norms and power relations. While Kemal's home represents his inner world and personal idealism, political meeting rooms and official buildings symbolize how political idealism is transformed within the politics-interest nexus. The spaces that appear in the film, such as meeting rooms and campaign offices, are presented as areas where politics is transformed into a stage, and the content and meaning of these spaces are reshaped according to individuals' quests for power (Özmen, 2021).

The final scene of the film, where Dr. Kemal meets at the pork restaurant, is ironically the simplest yet most corrupt form of the "real" power space he has been trying to reach since the beginning—not politically, but through informal connections and mediation. His failure in all the spaces where he attempts to transform power relations, and his success in establishing a connection in this space where he makes no intervention, elevates the film beyond being merely a political parody. The transition between the artificiality of political representation and the decayed nature of real relationships is explored in a multilayered manner through space. Surrounded by sweat, humidity, dampness, and suffocating rooms, this scene not only portrays physical degradation but also the deviant pleasures embedded in desire and power relations (Özmen, 2021).

The multilayered meanings acquired by space in the film can be explained through the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey. Kemal's transformation illustrates the impact of modern politics on individuals and how social relations are manipulated through spatial arrangements. As Kemal loses his power in all the spaces where he tries to establish hierarchy, all spatial relationships shift to "Spatial Practices" and "Relative Space." In this way, space is both continuously reproduced through everyday activities and gains different meanings and qualities depending

Spatial Representation of the Desire for Political Domination and Power and the Construction of the Subject: Spatial Arrangement in the Film *Nasipse Adayız*

on the observer and circumstances. The film, focusing primarily on power relations, reveals the hierarchy between characters through the spaces that transform as a result of interactions.

In conclusion, *Nasipse Adayız* (Ercan Kesal, 2020) offers a structure that questions Turkey's social and political dynamics through the spatial representations of political practices. The film not only reveals how the bonds between the individual and society are transformed but also critically discusses the meaning loss of political discourse in the post-truth era, exposing the self-interest-driven nature of politics. The findings of this study also open several doors for future research. For instance, a similar spatial analysis could be applied to other political films or series in Turkish cinema to enable a comparison of the representation of space-politics across different periods. Furthermore, as this study focused on the theories of Lefebvre and Harvey, future studies could reveal new layers of interpretation by reading the same film through different theoretical tools, such as Foucault's heterotopia (Foucault, 2005), defined as "other spaces." Finally, research examining the relationship between the film's spatial arrangement and gender roles, or studies on audience reception of these spatial representations, would also offer significant contributions to the field.

References

- Alinia, A., & Gürkan, H. (2025). *Echoes of War: The Lingering Shadows of. Exploring the Cultural, Moral, and Technological Dimensions of Conflict*, 171.
- Benjamin, W. (2023). *The Arcades Project* (Ahmet Cemal, Trans.). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
- Berman, M. (2024). *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (Bülent Peker, Trans.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Bora, T. (2017). *Cereyanlar: Türkiye’de Siyasi İdeolojiler*. İletişim Yayınları.
- Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K. (2017). *Film Art: An Introduction*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Bourdieu, P. (2016). *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action* (H. U. Tanrıöver, Trans.). Hil Yayın.
- Foucault, M. (2005). *Özne ve İktidar* (Çev. I. Ergüden & O. Akınhay). Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Foucault, M. (2019). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, Trans.). İmge Kitabevi.
- Harvey, D. (2004). *The New Imperialism* (Hür Güldü, Trans.). Everest Yayınları.
- Harvey, D. (2006). *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Towards a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*. Verso.

Harvey, D. (2012). *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (Berna Kılınçer, Trans.). Sel Yayıncılık.

Harvey, D. (2013). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (Ayşe Deniz Temiz, Trans.). Metis Yayınları.

Harvey, D. (2019). *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Sungur Savran, Trans.). Metis Yayınları.

İnce, S. (2025). *Nasipse Adayız Filminin “Mitläufer” Karakteri Dr. Kemal Üzerine Sosyolojik ve Kültürel Bir Analiz*. *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi*, (65), 1-13. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/4325613>

Keyder, Ç. (2022). *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar*. İletişim Yayınları.

Lefebvre, H. (2014). *The Production of Space* (Işık Ergüden, Trans.). Sel Yayıncılık.

Özmen, E. (2021). *Nasipse Adayız: Ölüm dürtüsünün gelgitleri*. *Birikim Dergisi*. <https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/10602/nasipse-adayiz-olum-durtusunun-gelgitleri>





Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Received: 15 February 2025; **Accepted:** 2 July 2025

**Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov, Senior Lecturer,
International Journalism Department,
Uzbek State University of World Languages, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
mr.dadakhonov@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-9681-2024**

CONTENT TABLE

- Abstract & Introduction
- Literature Review
 - Table 1. Average values of the integral index of media literacy (Source: Internews, 2021)
- Materials and Methods
 - Table 2. Information about respondents
- Results
 - Figure 1. Types of Foreign aid in the field of MIL (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)
 - Positive and negative impacts of foreign aid
 - Table 3. Effects of foreign aid in the sphere of MIL (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)
 - Table 4. Main obstacles and challenges in further improving the efficiency of foreign projects in the field of MIL. (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)
- Discussion
 - Table 5. Key factors for the effectiveness of foreign aid in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan (Source: author's own creation)
 - The formula for identifying the effectiveness.
- Conclusion
- References

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Abstract

This research article investigates the dual dimensions of effectiveness inherent in foreign aid endeavours aimed at advancing MIL in Uzbekistan, including the issues of increasing the MIL level of the population and improving the efficiency of foreign projects in the field. As the main method of research, in-depth interviews were conducted with MIL experts and trainers in the country in a face-to-face manner. Through a comprehensive analysis of expert opinions and surveys conducted with key stakeholders in the field, including policymakers, educators, media professionals, and civil society representatives, the study delves into the impact of foreign assistance in shaping MIL frameworks within the unique sociocultural context of Uzbekistan. Through thematic analysis, the paper unveils the underlying complexities surrounding the utilization and impact of foreign aid in enhancing MIL in Uzbekistan. The findings reveal nuanced perspectives on the positive influence of foreign aid, acknowledging notable advancements in awareness and education. Based on the opinions of experts, general conclusions and proposals were presented on the development of the MIL sphere in the country and on further increasing the efficiency of the projects implemented by foreign donors.

Keywords: Media and information literacy (MIL), foreign aid, effectiveness, MIL experts, MIL projects.

Introduction

The field of media and information literacy (MIL) is of crucial importance in emerging democracies, where the media plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and promoting transparency and accountability (UNESCO, 2013; Carlsson, 2019; Ramaiah & Rao, 2021). In Central Asian countries, such as Uzbekistan, the transition towards democracy has brought about a growing need for foreign aid to support the development of MIL initiatives. However, the sustainability of such aid and its impact on fostering a culture of media freedom and critical thinking in Uzbekistan must be carefully considered and implemented. This theoretical article aims to explore the sustainability of foreign aid in the field of MIL in the Central Asian context, with a specific focus on Uzbekistan.

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on the role of MIL in promoting a free and democratic society (Nitsche, 2020; Reineck & Lublinski 2015). As emerging democracies strive to strengthen their media landscapes, foreign aid plays a crucial role in supporting the development of MIL programs. However, there is a lack of research on the sustainability of foreign aid in the field of MIL in emerging democracies, particularly in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan, a Central Asian country with a population exceeding 36 million, has undergone significant political and economic reforms since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. In recent years, the government has demonstrated an interest in modernizing its information space, including reforms in the media sector and the digital ecosystem. However, despite efforts at liberalization, the media environment faces systemic challenges and low levels of media and information

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

literacy (MIL) among the population.

Foreign aid has played a vital role in supporting Uzbekistan's transition processes — especially in areas like education, public health, governance, and, more recently, media development. International donors such as UNESCO, the European Union, Deutsche Welle Akademie, and USAID have funded initiatives to strengthen media capacities, promote digital literacy, and train journalists in fact-checking and ethical reporting (Dadakhonov, 2024c). However, support for media and information literacy (MIL) — particularly in institutional, policy, or curricular forms — remains fragmented and inconsistent.

Although MIL is increasingly recognized as essential for democratic development and countering disinformation, the Uzbek government has not yet fully institutionalized MIL within the national education system or public communication strategies. Pilot programs and workshops are mainly donor-driven and short-term. There is no unified state-level policy, framework, or budget line specifically for MIL, and most local media professionals lack access to sustained, systematic MIL training. This gap underscores the continuing need for foreign aid in this domain — not to replace national responsibility, but to complement and support capacity-building.

Therefore, understanding the sustainability of foreign aid in the field of MIL in emerging democracies like Uzbekistan requires not only a technical evaluation of project outcomes, but also an analysis of the structural limitations and political will at the national level (United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, 2025). By providing this contextual backdrop, this study aims to offer a more comprehensive view of the issue for both local and international readers. This research will utilize a qualitative approach, gathering expert opinions and insights through interviews and surveys. Experts in the fields of education, media, and international development in Uzbekistan will be invited to share their perspectives on the effectiveness and sustainability of foreign aid in MIL. Their views will provide valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of aid programs in this particular field.

The findings of this research will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on MIL in Uzbekistan, as well as inform policymakers and practitioners engaged in promoting MIL initiatives in the country. By understanding the experts' opinions on the outcomes and sustainability of foreign aid, policymakers can make informed decisions regarding future investments, program adaptations, and resource allocation.

Literature Review

Since the topic of this research is at the intersection of several fields, it was necessary to study the literature and scientific research in the following fields. In covering this topic, it is necessary to mention a number of literature about foreign aid and its influence on the development of recipient countries.

Foreign aid plays a crucial role in supporting the development of recipient countries. According to Radelet (2006), foreign aid can be instrumental in promoting economic growth, reducing poverty, and addressing social inequalities. However, some scholars argued that the effectiveness of foreign aid depends on the design and implementation of aid initiatives, and whether they align with the priorities and needs of the recipient countries (Frot, Olofsgård & Berlin, 2014). Furthermore, the accountability and transparency of aid programs can also impact their success (Dreher and Fuchs, 2015).

Winters (2010) reviewed five different accountability relationships that exist in foreign aid projects among donors, governments, implementing agencies and end users and summarized existing empirical evidence, when there is more government and implementing agency accountability.

The field of MIL and its role in the development of society, in today's conditions of advanced information and media technologies, the importance of MIL is increasing more and more.

MIL have been recognized as crucial skills for individuals in the 21st century, in order to navigate the complex media landscape and critically engage with information. According to Kit Wai & Nie Suet (2022). media literacy is an important factor in determining how an individual internalises media messages which in turn, affect how they view the world (91 p.), as well as it is vital for the proper functioning and well-being of individuals in a democratic society. (Mohamed Salleh et al., 2019).

Alper and Herr-Stephenson (2013) argue that media literacy education is necessary for fostering informed, critical, and engaged citizens. However, an equally important consideration which has not been adequately addressed is ensuring that the media literacy course syllabus in schools and universities are relevant to the needs and challenges of the contemporary society (Mohamed Salleh et al., 2019). Australia, Canada, England, South Africa, Scandinavia, Russia as well as countries in Europe, South America and Asia are among the first countries that implemented media literacy within their school curriculum. Most of these curricula focus on educating society, especially children and teenagers to critically scrutinize and evaluate media messages (Fedorov et al., 2022; Kit Wai & Nie Suet, 2022).

MIL is often emphasized in the face of technological breakthroughs, when policy- and lawmakers find themselves unable to tackle emerging problems. Therefore, MIL should be understood as part of a whole that includes legislation and reforms in media, education and other fields of relevance – as part of a democracy strategy. This is a process that involves many different stakeholders in society, and combining

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

extensive collaboration with proactive political leadership is a challenge (Carlsson, 2019).

In the article entitled “Evaluating Media Literacy Education: Concepts, Theories and Future Directions” Martens (2010) synthesized a large subset of the academic literature on media literacy education. The author argued that media literacy is mostly defined in terms of the knowledge and skills individuals need to analyze, evaluate, or produce media messages and evaluated what is empirically known about the effectiveness of media literacy practices.

In “Instructional manual on media literacy for teachers of higher education institutions of Uzbekistan” (Sulaymanova, 2021) presented in the format of a modular educational and methodological complex. The uniqueness of this work lies in the fact that the training materials are based on domestic media practice. The manual also accumulates the practical experience of foreign researchers and media educators. It can be useful for university teachers, masters, doctoral students and scientific applicants, practicing journalists, employees of cultural centers, spiritual and educational associations.

Surveys and studies conducted until this period show that the MIL level of the population in the region is not high.

The conclusion of the survey of “*Sociological Research on the Study of Media Consumption and Media Information Literacy in Central Asian Countries: Kazakhstan Tajikistan, Uzbekistan*”: Among the countries studied, the average value of the integral index of Kazakhstan (16.8) can be attributed to the average level of media literacy, Uzbekistan - on the border between low and medium (12.2), the value of Tajikistan - low (11.5). (See: Table 1)

| Year | Kazakhstan | Tajikistan | Uzbekistan | Max |
|------|------------|------------|------------|-----|
| 2019 | 14,6 | 11,9 | 11,3 | 35 |
| 2021 | 16,8 | 11,5 | 12,2 | 35 |

Table 1. Average values of the integral index of media literacy (Source: Internews, 2021)

This situation shows the need to re-analyse the level of efficiency and sustainability of MIL projects implemented by donors and local organizations in Central Asian countries, and to make recommendations for the development of the sector based on the existing experiences and results.

In Central Asian countries, various specialists are conducting scientific research, surveys, and publishing scientific articles, reports, manuals and textbooks in the field of MIL and its development (Sulaymanova & Osmanova, 2021; Djumanova, 2022; Tailakova, 2023; Kadyrova, 2023). However, this research differs from other studies and books that it examines the sustainability and effectiveness of international projects and grants in the field of MIL with the opinion of foreman experts of the sphere in Uzbekistan. It will build on this existing literature to evaluate the impact

and sustainability of foreign aid initiatives promoting media literacy in Central Asia.

Materials and Methods

The present study sought to investigate the issues of foreign aid efficiency in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan. In order to achieve this, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 MIL experts and trainers, who were selected based on their expertise and experience in the field. Additionally, recent publications and books on MIL in Central Asia were also reviewed to supplement the insights obtained from the interviews.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected experts to gather their opinions and insights on the efficiency of foreign aid in promoting MIL in Central Asia. The interviews were structured around key themes such as the impact of foreign aid, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement.

The data collected from the interviews and literature review were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying recurring themes and patterns in the responses of the participants and the information obtained from the literature. This allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the issues related to foreign aid efficiency in MIL in Central Asia.

Participants were selected based on their expertise and experience in MIL training and implementation in CA. Morris (2015) stressed the significance of carefully selecting, locating, and reaching out to interviewees in any study involving in-depth interviews. The 'quality' of respondents accessed can significantly impact the study's quality. Key informants included prominent trainers and experts, authors of books and guidebooks in the sphere, project managers and coordinators from Uzbekistan, ensuring diverse perspectives and insights.

The qualitative method allowed for an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of prominent trainers and experts in the field.

In-depth interviews were conducted with selected participants to gather qualitative data regarding their opinions and experiences with foreign assistance initiatives in MIL. Interviews were conducted either in person or through virtual platforms, allowing for flexibility and accessibility.

Open-ended questions encouraged participants to provide detailed responses and share their perspectives freely. As emphasized by Rutledge and Hogg (2020), the interview questions would be open-ended, aiming to foster a discovery-driven methodology. The objective of conducting in-depth interviews is to gather comprehensive insights into an individual's viewpoint, personal experiences, feelings, and the inferred significance regarding a specific subject or matter.

The interview protocol was designed to elicit information on various aspects of foreign assistance projects in MIL, including their perceived effectiveness, challenges faced, and potential sustainability indicators.

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time was respected.

General information about experts is summarized in the **Table 2**.

| Code | Gender | Age | Academic degree | Role in MIL projects | Experience (in years) |
|-------------------|--------|-----|---|---|-----------------------|
| Uzbekistan | | | | | |
| R1 | Female | 53 | DSc, professor | Media trainer, MIL expert | 16 |
| R2 | Female | 43 | DSc, associate professor | Media trainer, MIL expert | 15 |
| R3 | Female | 50 | N/A | Journalist, editor, media trainer, project manager | 17 |
| R4 | Female | 64 | DSc, professor | Media trainer | 30 |
| R5 | Female | 52 | Candidate of philological sciences, associate professor | Media trainer | 6 |
| R6 | Female | 51 | Candidate of philological sciences, professor | Editor and translator (in MIL training courses and books about MIL) | 6 |
| R7 | Female | 47 | N/A | Media and MIL expert, trainer | 16 |
| R8 | Male | 50 | DSc, professor | Media trainer and MIL expert, project manager | 15 |
| R9 | Female | 50 | N/A | Journalist, media trainer, project manager | 6 |
| R10 | Female | 33 | PhD, associate professor | Media trainer | 7 |
| R11 | Female | 45 | N/A | Reporter, blogger, media trainer, project manager | 3 |
| R12 | Female | 30 | PhD | Lawyer, trainer | 5 |
| R13 | Female | 46 | Candidate of philological sciences, associate professor | Media trainer | 15 |
| R14 | Male | 41 | N/A | Editor, project manager | 3 |
| R15 | Male | 27 | N/A | Media trainer | 2 |

Table 2. Information about respondents

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the interview data. Transcripts were coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns and significant insights related to sustainability indicators in the CA context. Conducting in-depth interviews, coding, and analyzing thematically the responses were inspired by the guides explained in “Conducting In-Depth Interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews for Evaluation Input” by Boyce and Neale (2006)

Recent publications, books, and scholarly articles related to MIL in Central Asia were reviewed to complement the insights gathered from the expert interviews. This comprehensive literature review provided additional context, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence to support and enrich the findings of the study. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews were validated by comparing them with the information obtained from the literature, which helped in ensuring the credibility and reliability of the study results.

Overall, the methodology employed in this study aimed to provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the issues of foreign aid efficiency in MIL in Central Asia, based on the insights obtained from the interviews with experts and trainers, as well

as recent publications and books in the field.

Results

The main forms of foreign aid. The in-depth interview responses offer insights into the primary forms of foreign aid supporting media and information literacy (MIL) and education in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Here's an analysis of the key themes:

1. Training and Educational Support. Respondents identified training as a significant form of foreign aid, addressing gaps in knowledge and skills among professionals in journalism, education, and media. The training courses are often supported through international funding and focus on enhancing expertise and awareness around media literacy. For example, R1 mentions funding for media literacy courses aimed at journalists and educational managers, highlighting the need to improve knowledge across sectors. Similarly, R4 and R6 note the role of international training courses, conferences, and seminars, emphasizing these as crucial for expanding MIL. For example, opinion of one of the respondents was as follows: *"Foreign assistance" can be viewed both as an exchange of experience in the field of information and media literacy, and as the creation of joint educational programs, methodological and practical manuals, the organization of partnership projects in the format of conferences, seminars, training courses, master classes". (R4).*

2. Development of Resources. Another common form of foreign aid involves providing educational resources, including literature, manuals, and guides in foreign languages, which serve as essential tools for MIL development. R4 describes aid in terms of collaborative creation of educational materials and resources, like methodological guides, which reflect foreign expertise. These resources are vital for establishing a foundation in MIL that local organizations might lack.

3. Project-Based Financial Aid. Funding for specific projects, especially those based on competitions, allows for focused initiatives in MIL. Respondents cite grants and competitive funding as a means to drive innovation in educational approaches (R1). By funding projects, foreign donors encourage the development of creative solutions and sustainable practices in media literacy.

4. Expert Involvement and International Collaboration. Respondents, particularly R4 and R7, also highlight foreign experts' involvement, partnership projects, and international collaboration as forms of foreign aid. These partnerships facilitate the transfer of expertise and best practices from countries with established MIL systems, like Scandinavian nations, to Uzbekistan. R7 mentions how these collaborations can accelerate the process of introducing MIL, a field where international nonprofits can often offer flexibility and agility beyond that of state systems.

5. Challenges and Shortcomings in MIL Implementation. Some respondents, like R3, point to challenges within the Ministry of Education, particularly regarding the lack of a clear methodology for integrating MIL into the curriculum. This reflects a gap where foreign assistance may be directed not only toward resources and training

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

but also toward supporting systemic changes. The limited capacity within the local system suggests a reliance on foreign support to develop a comprehensive approach.

“There are small projects for the development of media literacy, however, the Ministry of Education, which is entrusted with the implication of MIL into education, lacks the methodology and methodology for introducing MIL into education, in general there is no competent management in this direction”. (R3)

6. Long-Term Impact of Foreign Aid. The responses collectively hint at a gradual but essential shift in the field of media education in Uzbekistan. As R7 notes, MIL has only recently entered the practical domain within schools, and international support is crucial in bridging gaps where the state system struggles to advance:

“In the Scandinavian countries, for example, MIL have been practiced since the second half of the last century. And many other countries have come a long way in understanding MIL and implementing its components at all levels, especially with regard to media education. In Uzbekistan, only this year (2022) the issue of introducing MIL into the school system has entered the practical mainstream. Undoubtedly, international organizations can accelerate the process of introducing MIL in Uzbekistan through the implementation of projects aimed at specific areas where it is difficult for the state system to develop, since non-profit organizations are more flexible in this regard, and they work in this direction in cooperation with government agencies”. (R7)

This indicates that while foreign aid has begun to make an impact, its full effects may be realized over a more extended period.

In general, foreign aid in Uzbekistan's MIL and educational sectors largely centers around training, resources, project funding, expert support, and international partnerships. These contributions are foundational, offering structural support where local capabilities are still developing. Respondents express optimism about foreign aid's potential to advance MIL but underscore the need for sustained, strategic assistance to overcome institutional limitations in the long term.

Based on the answers given by all interviewees, the following figure shows the foreign aid provided in the field of MIL today (Figure 1):

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

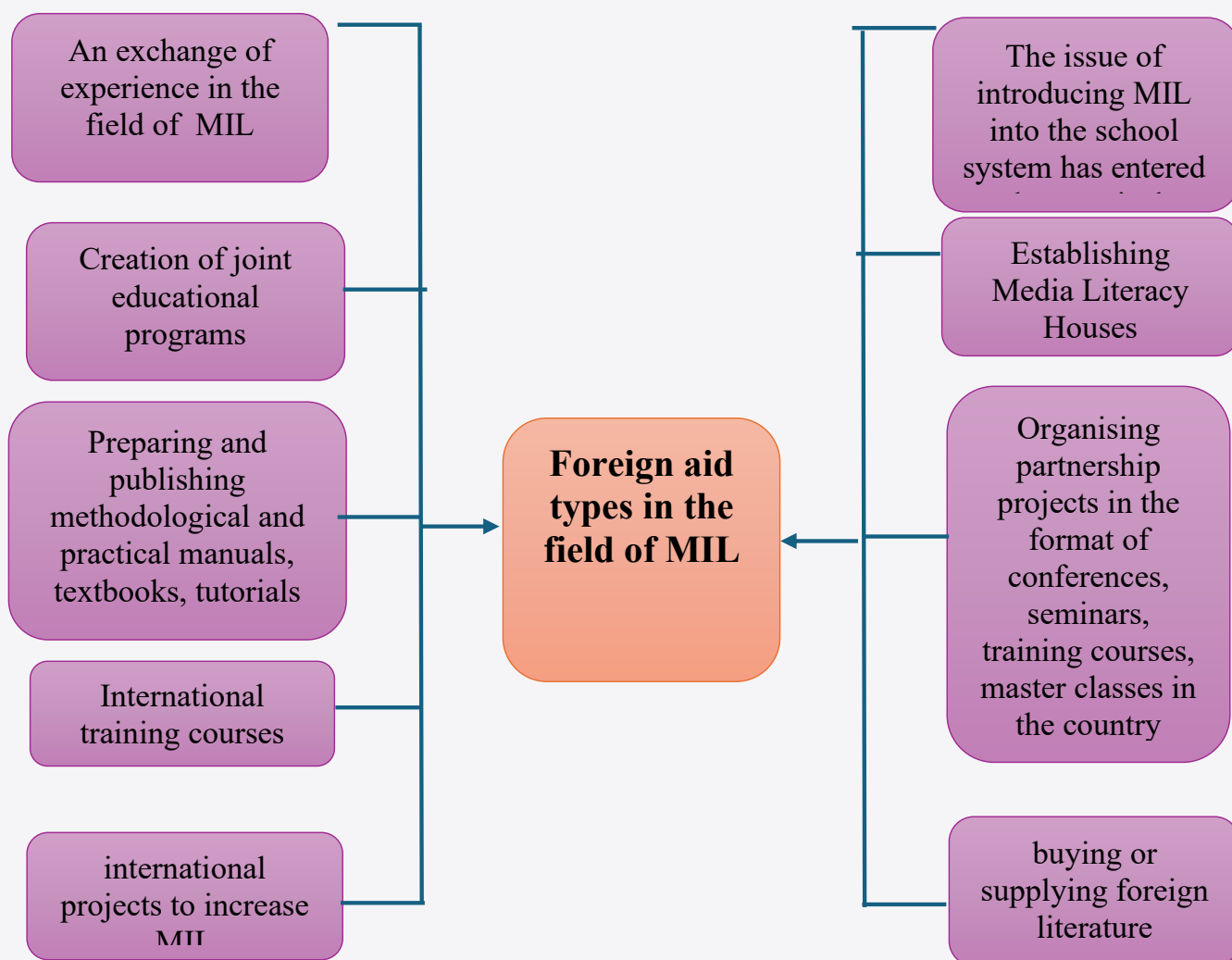


Figure 1. Types of Foreign aid in the field of MIL (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)

Positive and negative impacts of foreign aid. The analysis of these interview excerpts reveals both positive and negative perceptions of foreign aid in the field of media and information literacy (MIL) in Uzbekistan. Respondents generally highlight more positive impacts, but some also express reservations, suggesting a nuanced view of foreign involvement.

Positive Impacts of Foreign Aid:

1. National Development and Educational Improvement. Many respondents view foreign aid in MIL as a catalyst for national development, improving education quality and promoting informed media consumption. R7 emphasizes that comprehensive MIL support contributes to the broader development of the country, positively affecting multiple sectors:

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

“The comprehensive introduction of MIL, of course, has a beneficial effect on the development of the country, since this is a matter of quality education and quality media consumption. It influences to many areas of the development of the state” (R7).

2. Enhancing Political Atmosphere and Public Awareness. Several respondents point out that foreign aid can lead to a more positive political atmosphere by educating individuals and organizations in MIL. R13 specifically notes that MIL training fosters awareness, which has a constructive effect on political engagement, suggesting that informed citizens contribute to a healthier political environment.

3. Empowering Individuals and Organizations. Respondents like R12 emphasize that foreign aid provides foundational support for individuals and small projects, potentially leading to significant impacts. This perspective suggests that even small grants or resources can drive substantial change by empowering people to undertake larger initiatives:

“I consider it as a positive process. If a person receives support, then he/she starts to think about the project. Small supports can start big things”. (R12)

4. Correcting Misconceptions about Foreign Aid. R11 addresses common concerns about foreign aid being a tool for political influence, specifically mentioning the Soros Foundation as an example. However, this respondent argues that aid in MIL is beneficial, countering fears that foreign support might be intended to destabilize or control the recipient country. This viewpoint implies a perception of MIL aid as apolitical and aligned with positive educational objectives.

Negative Impacts and Reservations about Foreign Aid:

1. Potential for Hidden Agendas. A recurring theme among those expressing concerns is the idea that foreign organizations may have self-interested motives. R10 notes that “a wise organization wants its own interests to be stimulated first,” implying that foreign aid can sometimes prioritize the donor’s interests over the recipient’s needs.

2. Risk of Mismatched Goals or Values. Some respondents emphasize the need for foreign aid to respect local contexts. R4 highlights the importance of adapting foreign initiatives to the specific needs and characteristics of the region, cautioning that if aid projects are poorly aligned with local culture, they might lead to unintended negative consequences. This reflects an awareness that foreign methods may not always be suitable for local conditions.

3. Dependency and Influence over National Interests. R15 offers a more philosophical critique, noting that foreign aid inherently carries specific objectives that may ultimately serve the interests of the donor. This respondent points out that the long-term impacts of foreign aid are only revealed over time, and depend on the parties' ability to negotiate and foresee outcomes. This perspective suggests a degree of caution, as foreign aid may subtly influence the country's direction in ways that align with the donor's broader agenda:

"Any aid always creates interest in one form or another, and at the core of such aid there are always specific goals. Whether these objectives produce good or bad consequences for the recipient or serve the interests of the parties is another matter. How this "aid" positively or negatively affects the country's political, national and other characteristics is manifested not in the process, but in the outcome. That is, it comes from the ability of the parties to see the future and the ability to convince the other party in negotiations". (R15)

4. Concerns about Political Influence. Although not widely mentioned, a few respondents imply that foreign aid, particularly in the field of MIL, could influence the country's political or national identity. R11 acknowledges that officials may worry about foreign aid's political implications, although they personally believe such support is generally beneficial. This acknowledgment of political concerns reflects an underlying sensitivity to sovereignty and control within the context of foreign involvement.

The respondents' perspectives on foreign aid in MIL reveal a complex balance of optimism and caution. On the one hand, foreign aid is largely viewed as a beneficial force that aids in educational, social, and political development by empowering individuals and institutions. However, some respondents highlight potential risks, particularly regarding hidden donor interests and the importance of adapting aid to local contexts. This mix of views suggests that while foreign support is welcomed, there is also an awareness of the need for careful, context-sensitive approaches to maximize positive outcomes and minimize unintended impacts.

The opinions expressed about the negative and positive effects of foreign aid are summarized in the following table (Table 3):

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Table 3. Effects of foreign aid in the sphere of MIL (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)

| # | Positive effects of foreign aid | Negative effects of foreign aid |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | “Beneficial effect on the development of the country, since this is a matter of quality education” | “Cultural and Political Bias and Influence” |
| 2. | “Beneficial effect on the quality media consumption” | “Dependency on External Sources” |
| 3. | “Media education a part of human literacy, focusing on teaching critical thinking skills and developing quality strategies” | “Short-Term Focus” |
| 4. | “It has a positive effect on the political atmosphere”. | “Limited Community Engagement” |
| 5. | “If a person receives support, then he/she starts to think about the project. Small supports can start big things” | “Mismatch with Local Needs” |

The main obstacles and challenges in further improving the efficiency of foreign projects in the field of MIL. The responses gathered from in-depth interviews reveal several interconnected obstacles that hinder the effectiveness of foreign projects in Media and Information Literacy (MIL), particularly in the regions you're studying. Here's a breakdown of these obstacles:

1. **Influence and Control by State Organizations.** Respondents noted that state bodies have substantial control over MIL projects. This influence can create challenges, as it often results in bureaucratic complexities and can hinder the autonomy of organizers and participants. When projects are overly influenced by state organizations, it may stifle innovative ideas or approaches, leading to repetitive practices and less impactful outcomes.

2. **Documentation and Legal Challenges.** Another common theme among respondents was the burden of extensive documentation when working with legal organizations. This process can delay project implementation and create an additional administrative layer that organizers must navigate. This issue reflects a broader challenge in many international projects, where excessive paperwork and legal requirements can be obstacles, especially for those unfamiliar with legal and regulatory standards.

3. **Limited Skills and Experience Among Organizers.** Respondents identified a lack of skills and experience among local MIL activists as a limiting factor. According to one media trainer, this includes ineffective fund utilization and a lack of consideration for engaging appropriate participants. When participants are chosen without clear motivations or relevant backgrounds, it weakens the overall impact of the project. Additionally, failing to address cultural or mental characteristics can limit participant engagement and project success.

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

4. Nepotism and Favoritism in Project Coordination. Several respondents highlighted issues of favoritism, where coordinators repeatedly award grants or management roles to the same people or organizations. This "closed circuit" discourages fresh talent from participating and innovating in MIL projects. As noted by respondents, this practice may improve project efficiency for experienced participants but limits opportunities for new entrants, which could be detrimental to the overall diversity and inclusivity of MIL programs. Here is one of the responds:

"Coordinators often agree and give it to their acquaintances. Or regular winning contestants win over and over again. Those with little experience or those who are in need will not win in many cases" (R12).

5. Language Barriers. Language barriers were also noted as significant obstacles, particularly for those who are not proficient in widely used languages like Russian or English. This limitation restricts access to international projects and training courses, potentially excluding motivated participants who lack language skills but could otherwise benefit from and contribute to these projects.

These findings highlight the need for targeted strategies to address the structural, administrative, and skill-based challenges in MIL projects. By promoting inclusivity, ensuring fair project management practices, and supporting skill-building for local MIL activists, project organizers could work towards more impactful and sustainable outcomes. Additionally, providing language support could allow a more diverse group of participants to engage, further enhancing the effectiveness and reach of MIL initiatives.

In general, all respondents in their answers admitted that there are many obstacles. Among them, the most mentioned ones are shown in the following table (Table 4):

Table 4. Main obstacles and challenges in further improving the efficiency of foreign projects in the field of MIL. (Source: own creation according to in-depth interview results)

| # | Main obstacles and challenges | Number of mentions by the interviewees |
|----|--|--|
| 1. | Permission by state administrative organs | 5 |
| 2. | Familiarity, groupism | 3 |
| 3. | Lack of skills among domestic MIL activists | 3 |
| 4. | Lack of professionals and specialists | 4 |
| 5. | Language barriers | 1 |
| 6. | Problems of implementation MIL in school education | 2 |
| 7. | Few projects and insufficient allocation of funds | 2 |

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Suggestions and recommendations by the media experts for improving the efficiency and sustainability of MIL projects. Dad, [11/10/2024 11:03 PM]

The respondents provided a range of recommendations to improve the efficiency and sustainability of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) projects, emphasizing the need for strategic planning, collaboration, educational integration, and equitable resource allocation. Here's an analysis of the main themes:

1. **Promotion of Research and Quality Content Development.** Respondents suggested enhancing MIL research and content quality, aligning these with modern media transformations. By intensifying research efforts, the projects can better address current issues in MIL and adapt to evolving digital literacy needs. This research-based approach could help ensure MIL content is both relevant and impactful, as well as encourage innovation and progress in project design.

2. **Government Partnerships and Institutional Support.** Several experts recommended collaborating with government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Public Education, to strengthen MIL efforts. Integrating MIL initiatives within governmental structures, such as education ministries, could provide long-term support, broaden the reach of MIL initiatives, and enhance project credibility. This approach also suggests that institutional backing could lead to a more cohesive framework for implementing MIL programs nationwide.

3. **Innovative and Creative Outreach Methods.** Creative industries, including theatre and music, were highlighted as tools for popularizing MIL through engaging formats. Such creative avenues can resonate with a wider audience, especially when localized and culturally relevant. As seen in Kazakhstan's use of a musical to promote MIL, this approach leverages entertainment as an educational tool, making MIL concepts more accessible and memorable.

"The cultural sphere of theatres and further such a creative industry also attracts the illuminated media information literacy. Because we saw in Kazakhstan there was a musical scene (play), which was aimed at the development of media information literacy among people through such kind of creative industries. We can also develop musical performance theatres, for example, stories and novels. We can develop and inculcate media information literacy among the population".
(R2)

4. **Youth Engagement and Peer-to-Peer Learning:** Experts noted the importance of involving youth through engaging, peer-led initiatives, as well as forming a consistent "youth contingent" to sustain MIL projects. By fostering a community of young advocates who can share knowledge and teach their peers, MIL projects could create a ripple effect that reaches various demographics more naturally and effectively.

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

"It is necessary to make interesting decisions based on electronic platforms for the development of MIL and this will help both develop and increase the coverage of media information literacy in the country. I think that for sustainability it is necessary to form a permanent youth contingent. It seems to me that MIL can be developed by example on the principle of teaching peers" (R14).

5. Educational Integration. Many respondents advocated for MIL to be incorporated into formal education, starting from early childhood through to higher education. This proposal reflects a long-term approach that aims to embed MIL as a foundational competency. Teaching MIL from a young age could foster critical thinking skills and media awareness, addressing the issue systematically and consistently across generations.

"MIL should be taught from childhood. For this, it is necessary to establish cooperation with schools, conduct continuous training and practical exercises among students from the 1st to the 11th grade, make presentations on social networks using various online platforms, and open clubs that help to develop MIL separately in the neighborhoods". (R11)

6. Interactive and Digital Learning Tools. The use of digital platforms, including mobile games, was identified as a promising method for expanding MIL outreach. By developing interactive tools tailored to local cultural contexts, MIL projects could reach a broader audience, especially among children and teens. These tools make MIL learning more accessible, engaging, and adaptable, aligning with how young people often interact with technology.

"In order to widen the field of MIL, I would recommend increasing the number of interactive, mobile games for different ages, adapting them to the Uzbek segment, and widening them in kindergartens and schools". (R5)

7. Fairness in Grant Distribution and Avoiding Favoritism. Concerns about the fairness of grant allocation were repeatedly raised, with respondents calling for more transparency and objectivity in the funding process. These issues reflect systemic challenges in ensuring equal opportunities for MIL project participants. Creating an open database of MIL initiatives, as one respondent suggested, could help reduce redundancy and improve collaboration across projects, while more equitable funding practices could encourage wider participation and innovation.

8. Transparency and Accountability in Project Management. Respondents shared experiences of unfair financial practices, including cases where coordinators took disproportionate cuts of project funds. Such practices can discourage skilled experts from participating in MIL initiatives. Transparency in fund allocation, accountability measures, and fair compensation could enhance trust among participants and ensure resources are used effectively.

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

The respondents provided a multi-faceted approach to enhancing MIL project effectiveness and sustainability. Their suggestions highlight the need for diverse methods, including creative and technological engagement, fair grant allocation, and institutional partnerships. By implementing these recommendations, MIL initiatives can foster a more informed and literate society, equipped to navigate the complexities of modern media landscapes. Some experts put forward the idea of applying it to educational processes as one of the most effective ways to develop the field of MIL:

Discussion

The Need for Foreign Aid in MIL in the region. Central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, have historically struggled with limited media freedom and restricted access to information. With the recent wave of democratization, there has been a greater demand for MIL programs to empower citizens with the skills and knowledge to critically engage with media content and hold their governments accountable.

The experts from four countries of the region discussed the popularization of communities, low level of media literacy, the lack of critical thinking, and other issues during the expert meeting “How to Improve the Media Literacy of the Population of the Central Asian Countries?” held by the CABAR.asia analytical platform on March 18 (CABAR.asia, 2022).

Foreign aid has played a crucial role in supporting the development of MIL initiatives in the region, providing funding, expertise, and resources to local organizations and institutions.

While foreign aid has undeniably played a pivotal role in advancing MIL in Uzbekistan, sustaining these gains necessitates a holistic strategy. This involves fostering local ownership, tailoring initiatives to the cultural context, and addressing the dynamic nature of the digital environment. The insights provided by experts in this analysis contribute valuable perspectives to the ongoing dialogue on enhancing the effectiveness of foreign aid in media literacy initiatives.

The discourse also unveiled the importance of tailoring foreign aid programs to align with the socio-cultural context of Uzbekistan. Experts emphasized the necessity of nuanced approaches that account for the specific information landscape and digital habits prevalent in the country. This recognition of cultural nuances, they argued, is essential for ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of MIL interventions over time (Dadakhonov, 2023).

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

The experts highlighted that in the context of global information warfare, when the population of the region is drawn into wars that do not threaten their lives, this can lead to tension within countries. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the level of media literacy, and this should be done at the government level.

The experts proposed several measures to improve the situation with the level of media literacy, including:

- The governments of countries should work more thoroughly and fundamentally to improve media literacy and critical thinking of the population of their countries;

- To support initiatives and educate different segments of the population;

- To strengthen work to ensure own information security;

- Use a wide range of tools to increase empathy;

- Create zero tolerance for violence using all available tools and opportunities;

- To support local independent media so that they do not depend on grants and projects from foreign states (CABAR.asia, 2022).

Activities and achievements in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan based on foreign aid initiatives

Based on the answers given by the respondents in the interviews and the evidence and information provided in the studied literature, internet resources, the gesture implemented in Uzbekistan through the support of foreign aid can be classified as follows:

1. Training workshops and seminars. Foreign aid initiatives have supported the organization of training workshops and seminars on MIL in Uzbekistan. These activities have aimed to improve the skills and knowledge of media professionals, educators, and students in understanding and critically analyzing media content. As a result of several years of workshops and training courses of foreign stakeholders, groups of trainers consisting of strong MIL experts were formed not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Central Asia.

2. Curriculum development: Foreign aid has been instrumental in the development of MIL curriculum in Uzbekistan. This has involved the design of learning materials and resources to be used in schools, universities, and vocational education programs. Some of the main MIL issues were included in a number of subjects in the secondary school curriculum. In the country, MIL field was initially included in the curriculum of higher education institutions providing knowledge in the field of journalism. Based on the initiative of UNESCO, the guidebook "Media and information literacy in journalism" (Muratova, Grizzle, & Mirzakhmedova, 2019) was published, and this book now serves as the main source of knowledge for journalism students. In recent years, many universities in Uzbekistan, including the National University of Uzbekistan, the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, have included courses in the field of Media Education and MIL in the curriculum of a number of specialties and started teaching is being placed. In this regard, in secondary schools, some topics related to the field of MIL are taught in the textbooks of a number of subjects, such as history, mother tongue, informatics,

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

labour. However, in the neighbouring country of Kazakhstan, as part of the MediaCAMP project of the international organization Internews (USA), a textbook "Media and information literacy" for students of grades 9-11/12 at secondary schools in the Russian and Kazakh languages, as well as their teaching aids, was created. (Khodoreva, 2021a) and teaching as a separate subject was introduced (Khodoreva, 2021b).

The application of this experience in Uzbekistan is also possible for today's youth, who are growing up surrounded by today's information and media technologies, who take daily important news from Tik-Tok, Instagram, and Telegram channels more than official media channels, and form their worldview and information culture. will be useful for the generation. During the in-depth interviews, respondents used terms such as "Ocean of Information " and "Media Bush" to describe the Media and MIL fields.

If the young generation is introduced to the systematic teaching of the MIL field at all stages of kindergarten, school and education, they will be able to find and use useful information for themselves without "drowning" in this "ocean of information"; they will be helped to find their right way easily in the "media bush", which is full of information attacks such as misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and bullying etc.

3. Research and advocacy. Foreign aid initiatives have supported research and advocacy efforts to promote MIL in Uzbekistan. This has involved the funding of studies to assess the level of MIL in the country and to identify areas for improvement. A number of manuals, electronic resources were created, articles and research papers were published.

4. Public awareness campaigns. Foreign aid has also supported public awareness campaigns on MIL in Uzbekistan. This has involved the production of educational materials, public service announcements, and social media campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of media literacy skills.

5. Capacity building. Foreign aid initiatives have contributed to the capacity building of local organizations and institutions working in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan. This has involved training and technical assistance to strengthen their ability to deliver effective media literacy programs. In October of 2022 year "Media Literacy House" was established in Tashkent and began to operate. Until the end of 2024, a series of workshops organized in the "Houuse" to improve the MIL level of many schoolchildren and employees of a number of organizations in the country. However, the founder of "Media Literacy House" stated that she was unable to continue her activities due to the end of the project period and the lack of foreign and local grants.

6. Establishment of networks and partnerships. Foreign aid has facilitated the establishment of networks and partnerships between local and international organizations working on MIL in Uzbekistan. These collaborations have provided opportunities for knowledge sharing, skills transfer, and resource mobilization to advance MIL initiatives in the country.

7. Technology and infrastructure development. Foreign aid initiatives have

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

supported the development of technology and infrastructure for MIL in Uzbekistan. This has involved the provision of equipment, software, and digital platforms to enhance access to media literacy resources and training opportunities.

Key factors of foreign aid effectiveness. In examining the effectiveness of foreign aid in the realm of MIL within Uzbekistan, our study engaged with experts in the field to glean valuable insights. The discussions underscored a nuanced landscape where foreign aid initiatives have demonstrated notable impact yet face challenges in long-term viability.

Several experts highlighted the positive contribution of foreign aid in education (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016; Heyneman & Lee, 2016; Masino & Niño-Zarazúa, 2016). For instance, scholars Masino & Niño-Zarazúa (2016) wrote:

“Relying on a theory of change typology, we highlight three main drivers of change of education quality:

(1) supply-side capability interventions that operate through the provision of physical and human resources, and learning materials;

(2) policies that through incentives seek to influence behaviour and inter-temporal preferences of teachers, households, and students;

(3) bottom-up and top-down participatory and community management interventions, which operate through decentralization reforms, knowledge diffusion, and increased community participation in the management of education systems” (53 p.)

Some other researchers discussed the positive influence of foreign assistance in establishing foundational MIL infrastructure, including educational programs and awareness campaigns (Dadakhonov, 2024a; 2024b). This, they argued, has contributed to an initial surge in MIL awareness among diverse demographics. However, concerns were raised regarding the sustainability of these initiatives, with experts pointing to the need for greater local ownership and integration of MIL strategies into the national education framework (Dadakhonov, 2024a).

Based on the results of the conducted research, it can be summed up that the effectiveness of foreign aid in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan hinges on several key factors (Table 5):

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Table 5. Key factors for the effectiveness of foreign aid in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan
(Source: author's own creation)

| # | Key factors | Explanation |
|----|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Local Ownership and Engagement | Ensuring active involvement and ownership by local stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, and community organizations, is vital for the sustained impact of foreign aid initiatives |
| 2. | Cultural Relevance | Tailoring programs to align with Uzbekistan's unique cultural context is crucial. Recognizing local media consumption habits, language preferences, and societal norms enhances the effectiveness and acceptance of media literacy interventions |
| 3. | Integration into Education Systems | Embedding MIL into formal and informal education structures ensures longevity. This integration fosters a systematic approach, reaching a broad spectrum of the population, including students and educators |
| 4. | Continuous Adaptation | Recognizing the dynamic nature of the digital landscape, foreign aid programs should incorporate mechanisms for continuous adaptation. This involves staying abreast of evolving technologies, emerging media trends, and adjusting educational content accordingly |
| 5. | Collaboration and Partnerships | Building sustainable partnerships with local institutions, NGOs, and private sector entities fosters a collaborative ecosystem. This not only shares the responsibility but also enhances the resources available for long-term initiatives. |
| 6. | Monitoring and Evaluation | Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms helps gauge the impact of interventions over time. Regular assessments enable adjustments based on feedback, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of foreign aid efforts. |
| 7. | Community Engagement and Awareness | Fostering community engagement and raising awareness about the importance of media literacy creates a demand for sustained efforts. Communities that understand the value of media literacy are more likely to advocate for its continued integration |
| 8. | Capacity Building | Investing in the capacity building of local professionals, educators, and content creators develops a self-sufficient ecosystem. This empowers the local workforce to drive MIL initiatives independently |

By addressing these factors collectively, foreign aid programs can contribute to the sustainable development of MIL in Uzbekistan, fostering a resilient framework that adapts to the evolving needs of the population.

The formula for identifying the effectiveness. The formula for identifying the effectiveness of foreign aid projects in the field of MIL in Central Asian countries may include the following key factors:

“Effectiveness = (Reach of the project + Quality of content + Participant engagement) / (Cost of the project + Time taken for implementation)”

Where:

- Reach of the project refers to the number of individuals reached by the MIL initiatives. This can be measured by the number of participants or the coverage area.
- Quality of content is an assessment of the educational materials, resources, or media produced as part of the project, as well as the accuracy and relevance of the

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

information.

- Participant engagement measures the level of involvement and interaction of the target audience with the MIL programs.
- Cost of the project reflects the financial resources invested in the initiative, considering both direct and indirect costs.
- Time taken for implementation refers to the duration from the start to completion of the project.

It is important to note that this formula is just a conceptual representation, and the actual assessment of effectiveness may involve a more comprehensive and tailored evaluation methodology based on specific project goals and objectives.

CONCLUSION

The sustainability of foreign aid in the field of MIL in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries requires a strategic and long-term approach. By prioritizing local ownership, capacity building, and community engagement, foreign aid can support the development of sustainable MIL initiatives that promote media freedom, information access, and critical thinking. This model for sustainability can serve as a blueprint for foreign aid in other emerging democracies in the region, contributing to the advancement of MIL in Central Asia.

The examination of the effectiveness of foreign aid in advancing MIL within the unique landscape of Uzbekistan underscores the complexity of the endeavour. Through a meticulous review of existing literature, encompassing global perspectives on foreign aid in MIL development, the specificity of Uzbekistan's media landscape, case studies of aid programs, expert opinions, success indicators, and the importance of local empowerment, a multifaceted understanding has been cultivated.

Expert opinions, as gleaned from interviews with key stakeholders in Uzbekistan's media and education sectors, enrich the discourse by providing qualitative insights. These perspectives serve as a compass, guiding future interventions towards a more nuanced and contextually relevant approach.

As we navigate the complexities outlined in the literature, it becomes evident that the sustainability of foreign aid in MIL hinges on meticulous planning, community engagement, and adaptability to the dynamic media landscape. Clear success indicators and metrics, as identified by scholars, offer a roadmap for evaluating the impact of foreign aid initiatives and refining strategies for maximum efficacy.

In essence, this research paper serves as a vital contribution to the ongoing dialogue on foreign aid in MIL, specifically tailored to the Uzbekistan's context. By synthesizing expert opinions and lessons learned from both successful and less successful interventions, it provides a foundation for informed policymaking and strategic planning. As Uzbekistan continues its journey towards enhanced MIL, the insights derived from this analysis can guide future initiatives, fostering a more

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

resilient and informed society in the rapidly evolving realm of media and information. In recent years, the field of MIL has been developing and gaining popularity in Uzbekistan. Projects and grants organized by foreign donor organizations based on cooperation with representatives of the Ministry of Education and several NGOs play a decisive role in its development.

There is a lot of work to be done to develop the field and increase MIL of the country's population. In this regard, it is necessary to create grants and projects by the state along with foreign grants.

References

Alper, M., & Herr-Stephenson, R. (2013). Transmedia Play: Literacy Across Media. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 5(2), 366–369. doi: <https://doi.org/10.23860/jmle-5-2-2>.

Boyce, C., Neale P. (May 2006) Conducting In-Depth Interviews: A Guide for Designing and Conducting In-Depth Interviews for Evaluation Input. Pathfinder International Tool Series Monitoring and Evaluation – 2. 16 p. https://nyhealthfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/m_e_tool_series_indep_th_interviews-1.pdf

CABAR.asia (2022, April 6). Low Level of Media Literacy of the Central Asian Countries' Population. Retrieved from <https://cabar.asia/en/low-level-of-media-literacy-of-the-central-asian-countries-population>.

Carlsson, U. (2019). MIL in the Cause of Social Justice and Democratic Rule. In: U. Carlsson (ed.), *Understanding Media and Information Literacy (MIL) in the Digital Age: A Question of Democracy*. (pp.11–24) Gothenburg: Department of Journalism Media and Communication (JMG) University of Gothenburg. Sweden. 266 p.

Center for the Development of Contemporary Journalism (2021). Sostojanie mediagramotnosti sotrudnikov MNO, učitelej srednih škol i učenikov starših klassov g. Taškenta i Taškentskoj oblasti. Analitičeskij otčet Po materialam sociologičeskogo issledovanija. (The state of media literacy of employees of the Ministry of Education and Science, secondary school teachers and high school students in Tashkent and the Tashkent region. Analytical report Based on sociological research materials). Tashkent: Center for the Development of Contemporary Journalism. 38 p. [in Russian]

Dadakhonov, A. O. (2023). Theoretical approaches to Media and Information Literacy in Foreign Aid Projects (Model for Central Asian countries). *Communication Papers –Media Literacy & Gender Studies*. 12 (25), 23–46.

Dadakhonov, A. (2024a). The Effectiveness of Foreign Aid in the Sphere of Media and Information Literacy in Central Asian Countries. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 12, 48–72. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajc.2024.121003>.

Dadakhonov, A. (2024b). Analysis of Media and Information Literacy Definitions: A Qualitative Approach. *Studies in Media and Communication*. 12 (2), 116–129. doi: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v12i2.6659>.

Dadakhonov A.O. (2024c). Exploration of Foreign Aid Forms and Impact on Media and Information Literacy Initiatives in Central Asian context. *Communication Papers. Media Literacy and Gender Studies*, Vol.13 - No.26, June, 2024. <https://communicationpapers.revistes.udg.edu/article/view/22977/26613>

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

- Djumanova, S. (2022). National historical foundations of media education. *Foreign Languages in Uzbekistan*, (45), 67-83. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36078/1666077400>
- Dreher, A. & Fuchs, A. (2015). Rogue aid? An empirical analysis of China's aid allocation. *Canadian Journal of Economics / Revue Canadienne d'économie*, 48, 988-1023. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/caje.12166>
- Fedorov, A., Levitskaya, A & Tselykh, M. (2022). Analysis of media manipulation influences as a way to develop media competence of future teachers (on COVID-19 media texts). *Media Education*, 18(1), 119-125.
- Frot, E., Olofsgård A. & Berlin M.P. (2014). Aid Effectiveness in Times of Political Change: Lessons from Post-Communist Transition. *World Development*, 56, 127-138.
- Heyneman S.P. & Lee B. (2016). International organizations and the future of education assistance. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 48, 9-22, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.11.009>.
- Internews (2021). Sociological Research on the Study of Media Consumption and Media Information Literacy in Central Asian Countries: Kazakhstan Tajikistan, Uzbekistan. *INTERNEWS_Media_consumption_Media_literacy_UZBEKISTAN_2021.pdf*. 88 p. <https://prevention.kg/?p=12875>).
- Kadyrova, H.B. (2023). Value of developing media literacy, media education, information culture in Uzbekistan. *Science and Innovation International Scientific Journal*, 2 (9), 23-27, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8335465>
- Khodoreva, O. (2021a). Protiv fejkov i manipulacij. Kogda mediagramotnost' načnut prepodavat' v školah Kazahstana? (Against fakes and manipulation. When will media literacy be taught in schools in Kazakhstan?). Retrieved 19.02.2021 from <https://ru.internews.kz/2021/02/protiv-fejkov-i-manipulyatsij-kogda-mediagramotno-st-nachnut-prepodavat-v-shkolah-kazahstana/> [in Russian]
- Khodoreva, O. (2021b). Mediagramotnost' v pervye mozet byt' vključena v škol'nyu programmu v Kazahstane (Media literacy may be included in the school curriculum in Kazakhstan for the first time). Retrieved 18.06.2021 from <https://newreporter.org/2021/06/18/mediagramotnost-vpervye-mozhet-byt-vklyuchena-v-shkolnuyu-programmu-v-kazaxstane/>. [in Russian]
- Martens, H., (2010). Evaluating Media Literacy Education: Concepts, Theories and Future Directions. *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, 2 (1), 1-22.
- Masino, S. & Niño-Zarazúa M. (2016). What works to improve the quality of student learning in developing countries? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 48, 53-65. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.11.012>.
- Mohamed Salleh, S., Shamshudeen, R. I., Wan Abas, W. A., & Tamam, E. (2019). Determining media use competencies in media literacy curriculum design for the digital society: A modified 2-Wave Delphi method. *SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 11(1), 17-36.
- Morris, A. (2015). A practical introduction to in-depth interviewing. SAGE Publications Ltd, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473921344>
- Muratova, N., Grizzle, A. & Mirzakhmedova, D. (2019). Media and information literacy in journalism: A handbook for journalists and journalism educators. Tashkent: Baktria Press. 128 p. Retrieved 30.12.2019 from https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mil_eng.pdf

Issues of Foreign Aid Efficiency in the Field of Media and Information Literacy in Uzbekistan

Nitsche, L. (2020). The next generation of Media and Information Literacy. Deutsche Welle, Bonn, Germany.

Radelet, S. (2006). A Primer on Foreign Aid. Working Paper No. 92. Center for Global Development. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.983122>

Ramaiah, K. Ch. & Rao, M. S. (2021) Media and Information Literacy: A Bibliography. DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, 41 (4), 316-336, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14429/djlit.41.4.17358>.

Reineck, D. & Lublinski, J. (2015). Media and Information Literacy: A human rights-based approach in developing countries. Discussion Paper. DW Akademie, Bonn, Germany.

Riddell, A., Niño-Zarazúa, M. (2016). The effectiveness of foreign aid to education: What can be learned? International Journal of Educational Development, 48, 23–36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.11.013>.

Rutledge, P.B., Hogg, J.L.C. (2020). In-Depth Interviews. In J. Bulck (Ed.) The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0019>

Sulaymanova S. & Osmanova D. (2021) Uzbekistan oliy ta'lim muassasalari ukituvchilari uchun mediasavodxonlik buyicha ukuv ku'llanma (Instructional manual on media literacy for teachers of higher educational institutions of Uzbekistan). Tashkent, Internews. 212 p. [in Uzbek]

Tailakova, Sh.N. (2023) The role of the media in the development of media education in secondary schools: international and national experience. Science and Innovation International Scientific Journal, 2 (8), 10–12, doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8219214>

UNESCO (2013). Global MIL Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies. Kasinskaite-Buddeberg I., Boade G., Grizzle A. (Eds.) Paris: UNESCO. 158 p. [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224655>.

UNESCO (2021). Grizzle A., Wilson C. & Gordon D. (Eds.) Think Critically, Click Wisely! Media and Information Literate Citizens. Second edition of the UNESCO MIL curriculum for educators and learners. Paris, France. 412 p. URL: https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/mil_eng.pdf

United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2025). Evaluation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Uzbekistan (2021-2025) Final Report. https://uzbekistan.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/UZB_UNSDCF%20evaluation%20report_final.pdf

Wai Kit, L. & Suet Nie, Kh. (2022). The effect of personal locus in media literacy on youth's interpretation of violent media messages. SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research. 14(3), 2022, 91–103.

Winters, M.S. (2010). Accountability, Participation and Foreign Aid Effectiveness, International Studies Review, 12 (2), 218–243. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2010.00929.x>



Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Received: 21 August 2025; **Accepted:** 7 December 2025

Eda AZAP-ÖZTEMEL
Visual Communication Design,
Istinye University, Istanbul, Türkiye
edaa.azap@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3218-2078

CONTENT TABLE

- Abstract & Introduction
- Literature Review
 - Digital Activism: Definition and Conceptual Framework
 - Historical Evolution: From Networked Publics to Platform-Based Activism (2000–2024)
 - Platform Governance: Digital Activism, the Visibility Economy, and Algorithmic Culture
 - Connective Action Framework
- 2.1. Personalized Action Frames
 - Organizationally Enabled Networks
 - Bridging Connective and Platform-Based Activism: From Individualized Participation to Platform-Mediated Mobilization
 - Shift Toward Platform-Based Activism (2018–2024)
 - Platforms as Gatekeepers
 - Algorithmic Culture and Mediation of Activist Content
 - Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Emotional Algorithms
 - Characteristics of Platform-Based Activism
 - Visibility Labor
 - Strategic Algorithmic Tactics
- Platform Incentive Structures
- Concrete Examples of Platform-Based Activism
- Case Studies and Empirical Literature Context
- Methodology
- Case Study 1: Mahsa Amini Protests (Iran, 2022) – Algorithmic Culture and Digital Activism
- Case Study 2: #NoKings – U.S. Digital Infrastructure and Evidence-Based (EB) Activism
- Case Study 3: #StopAsianHate Movement – U.S. (2021–Present)
- Findings
- Discussion
- Implications and Recommendations
- Conclusion
- Limitations
- References

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Abstract

This study explores the growing influence of algorithmic interventions on digital activism across online platforms. On social media, factors such as content visibility, engagement rates, and the type of information presented to users are largely shaped by algorithms. Through a review of the literature and case study analyses, the research reveals how algorithms shape digital activism, influence the visibility of social movements, and transform their mobilization power. The findings suggest that algorithms can both amplify and constrain activist content. Concepts like the “visibility economy” and “emotional algorithms” are particularly significant, reshaping the forms and strategies of digital activism. The study aims to provide insights for researchers seeking to understand the evolving nature of digital activism, as well as strategic guidance for activists in designing content and mobilization efforts.

Keywords: Algorithmic culture, digital activism, social movements, visibility economy, connective action

Introduction

Digital activism extends beyond traditional forms of social movements and advocacy, increasingly taking shape within the algorithmic logic of social media and digital platforms. Today, the success of a movement depends not only on the content and political context of its message but also on how that content interacts with algorithms, the aesthetic and timing strategies employed, and the engagement practices of users. Social media platforms determine, through algorithms, which content is prioritized, what types of information are shown to users, and the potential for interaction—directly influencing the visibility and impact of digital activism.

Literature reviews and case studies indicate that algorithms can both support and limit digital activism. In this context, concepts such as the “visibility economy” and “emotional algorithms” compel activists to rethink every aspect of their work, from content production to campaign strategy. Activists increasingly rely on engagement-driven content—short videos, targeted hashtags, and striking visuals—to align with algorithmically favored formats. Cross-platform strategies help reduce dependence on a single channel and build resilience against restrictive mechanisms.

This study aims to examine how digital activism is shaped within algorithmic environments and how it can affect the online visibility and mobilization strategies of social movements. By providing observations on content creation and engagement practices on digital platforms, along with conceptual discussions, the research offers a foundational framework for understanding the dynamics of digital activism and evaluating the effectiveness of online campaigns.

Literature Review

Digital Activism: Definition and Conceptual Framework

Digital activism is defined as the use of online platforms by individuals and communities to raise awareness, take action, and demand change on social, political, or environmental issues (Joyce, 2010; Tufekci, 2017). It is not simply the migration of traditional activism into digital spaces, but rather a transformative process in which practices of participation, mobilization, and public engagement are reshaped (Milan, 2015). In the literature, this concept highlights the democratizing potential of digital activism while critically addressing its limitations, such as platform governance, surveillance, and algorithmic mediation (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Kaun & Uldam, 2018).

A notable critique in the literature examining the relationship between information and communication technologies and activism is that some studies are anchored in pre-Web 2.0 contexts, making them inadequate for understanding contemporary digital activism (Anduiza et al., 2009). In response, Earl and Kimport (2011) systematically studied internet-based activism and explained the role of digital tools in social movements through three main categories:

1. E-mobilizations: This category covers instances where the internet is used to support traditional forms of activism. Examples include online petition campaigns, email outreach, or informational and call-to-action activities on social media. Here, the internet functions as a tool that enables existing movements to reach broader audiences more quickly.

2. E-tactics: This approach refers to cases where the internet provides movements with new strategic opportunities. E-tactics involve developing innovative methods that differ from traditional organizing and mobilization practices. For instance, calling for a protest via social media or organizing online solidarity campaigns can be considered e-tactics.

3. E-movements: This category allows individuals and groups to communicate rapidly, share information, and build consensus online. People can self-organize, launch social movements, and sustain them without relying on traditional organizational structures. In this context, the internet is not merely a tool but a central element of the movement, forming the core of organizational processes. Examples include fully online-organized social movements or solidarity networks emerging on digital platforms.

Earl and Kimport's classification helps us understand how digital tools facilitate social movements. It accelerates information sharing, eases collective organization, and diversifies avenues for participation. This demonstrates that digital activism is not only technology-driven but also encompasses organizational and strategic dimensions.

Van Laer and Van Aelst (2010) offer an alternative classification, distinguishing

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

between internet-based activism, which includes actions that occur entirely online, and internet-supported activism, which uses digital tools to organize offline actions. Additionally, digital activism is often conceptualized along three dimensions: network connectivity, emotional engagement, and hybrid mobilization. This highlights the intertwining of online and offline spaces (Chadwick, 2017; Jenkins et al., 2013; Papacharissi, 2015).

Historical Evolution: From Networked Publics to Platform-Based Activism (2000–2024)

The first wave of digital activism emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the increasing availability of the internet (Karatzogianni, 2015). During this period, the internet enabled users to connect with one another and shape public opinion in online spaces, a phenomenon described by the concept of networked publics emphasized by boyd (2010) and Castells (2012). This concept refers to online communities formed through digital networks where users create, share, and discuss content, offering new opportunities for social interaction and public engagement. Activists coordinated protests and disseminated information quickly via email chains, online petitions, discussion forums, and blogs (Papacharissi, 2015). A prominent example is the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, where digital tools facilitated global solidarity (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Before Web 2.0, the limitations of digital tools constrained the organizational and reach capacity of movements, and activism was often conducted through individual posts and forums (Anduiza et al., 2009; Garrett, 2006). Howard Rheingold (2002) coined the term smart mobs to describe this era. According to Rheingold, mobile devices and the internet allowed individuals to organize rapidly and participate in coordinated actions, enabling social movements to form without traditional hierarchical structures. Networked participation created a culture in which users were no longer passive consumers of content but active contributors, producing and sharing information and engaging in social movements.

By the mid-2000s, Web 2.0 transformed online participation into a more interactive experience, making user-generated content, social networking, and multimedia sharing possible (Papacharissi, 2015). Platforms such as Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and YouTube enabled decentralized mobilization, real-time communication, and global reach. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) describe this shift as a transition from connective activism—characterized by loosely networked individuals sharing information—to platform-based activism, in which participation, coordination, and visibility are shaped by the platform itself. This transformation allowed mass mobilizations to organize quickly and disseminate information to wide audiences.

Movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Gezi Park, and Indignados marked a critical turning point in the theoretical framework of digital activism (Howard & Hussain, 2013; Kaun & Uldam, 2018). During these movements, social media facilitated local coordination while also making actions visible globally, highlighting the impact of digital tools on politics and public opinion. They represented a new form of protest that combined traditional methods, like

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

demonstrations and sit-ins, with digital tools such as hashtags, viral videos, and online campaigns (Vegh, 2003; Gerbaudo, 2012). When linked to Tilly's (1978) work on social movements, these repertoires both reproduced historical forms of action and adapted them for online spaces, reaching broader audiences. In this context, the 2011–2015 movements tested the limits of platform-based activism and networked participation, enriching the theoretical framework from both historical and technological perspectives.

Digital activism has further diversified through forms like hacktivism. Groups such as Anonymous have used cyber tools to carry out digital resistance and actions against state and corporate policies. Today, technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and data analytics hold the potential to make digital activism even more powerful and effective (Chadwick, 2017). However, the use of these technologies also raises ethical and security concerns (Shah et al., 2013).

From the emergence of the internet to the present, digital activism has continuously evolved, playing a decisive role in the digitization of social movements and steadily consolidating its influence. Technological advances have enabled more individuals to take action for social change via online platforms. Consequently, digital activism is expected to evolve into an even more dynamic, participatory, and globally impactful force in the future.

Platform Governance: Digital Activism, the Visibility Economy, and Algorithmic Culture

The effectiveness of digital activism is directly linked to platform governance and political opportunity structures. Platform algorithms, content moderation policies, and corporate rules determine which messages gain visibility and which remain marginalized, creating a visibility-based economy of attention. In this way, they significantly shape the reach and impact of campaigns (Gillespie, 2018; Noble, 2018; Bucher, 2018; Beer, 2017; Serttaş et al., 2025). The visibility economy refers to economic systems in the digital age that generate value through attention, engagement, and visibility. Individuals, brands, or organizations gain both social and material value based on how visible and attention-grabbing they are on digital platforms (Hansen & Sørensen, 2017). While traditional economies produce value through goods or services, in the visibility economy, value is primarily measured by the capacity to capture human attention (Davenport & Beck, 2001). The more a video, post, or piece of content is viewed or shared, the more valuable it becomes.

The visibility economy is built on digital content and platforms. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok encourage users to create and share content, generating economic value through likes, comments, shares, and view counts (Van Dijck, 2013). In addition, the visibility economy produces social power: highly visible individuals or brands gain prestige and reputation (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Hansen & Sørensen, 2017).

In this context, digital activism allows social movements to make their voices heard and reach wide audiences online. Which content becomes more visible is largely

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

and reach wide audiences online. Which content becomes more visible is largely determined by algorithms. Social media algorithms prioritize posts based on users' interests and likelihood of engagement, turning visibility into a strategic resource. As a result, the messages of digital activists are shaped by the dynamics of the visibility economy and the filtering mechanisms of algorithmic culture. The more attention-grabbing and shareable the content, the greater its societal impact.

Since the 2010s, the proliferation of mobile technologies, the hybridization of online and offline campaigns, and the integration of global networked movements have transformed the dynamics of digital activism (Chadwick, 2017). Hashtag campaigns, viral protests, and digital strikes demonstrate how individuals and groups can mobilize quickly across borders. Examples include the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Greta Thunberg's climate strikes, and online advocacy for digital rights. During the same period, hacktivism gained prominence, with groups like Anonymous using digital tools to challenge corporate and political powers (Shah et al., 2013).

Additionally, Rheingold's (2002) concept of smart mobs highlights the role of mobile devices in facilitating coordinated mass action. These mobile networks allow individuals to act rapidly and in an organized manner, enabling digital activists' messages to reach broader audiences and gain visibility on platforms. Smart mobs thus illustrate how attention and visibility acquire value in digital spaces, showing how mobile and digital tools accelerate the social and political impact of digital activism.

Connective Action Framework

The Connective Action framework explains how social movements are organized in the digital age, how individual motivations translate into collective impact within digital networks, and the mechanisms that facilitate this process (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This makes it an essential theoretical lens for the study.

Unlike traditional collective action theories, Bennett and Segerberg's Connective Action model emphasizes personalized forms of participation rather than centralized organization. This is precisely what underlies contemporary digital activism: users connecting to a movement through personal narratives, visuals, hashtags, and content flows shaped by algorithms.

The framework directly intersects with algorithmic culture, the visibility economy and optimization strategies, media literacy, participation, and digital citizenship. Connective Action suggests that activism is no longer primarily about physical organization but has become a platform-based struggle for visibility. The framework helps examine how algorithms determine campaign visibility, which content is amplified, and which is suppressed. The theoretical process can be framed as follows:

- Individual participation → personalized content creatio

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

- This content → circulates through algorithmic filters
- Circulation → transforms into collective awareness and action

In this sense, algorithmic visibility emerges not as a vehicle for collective action, but as a driver of connective action.

The framework also addresses how activists attempt to manipulate algorithms to enhance visibility. Connective Action explains this not through a centralized agenda, but through network effects generated as individuals share their own narratives. Hashtag campaigns, personal experience sharing, and viral content strategies exemplify the practical implementation of Connective Action's user-centered mobilization logic. This theory grounds concepts like strategy and optimization in the structural logic of digital participation, rather than leaving them abstract (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Finally, Connective Action argues that participation in political and social processes is changing: personal narratives on digital platforms form an infrastructure for civic engagement. Users no longer act solely in response to organizational calls; instead, they are prompted into action by content encountered within algorithmic flows. Connections are formed through personal identity, emotions, and experiences rather than through formal organizations.

In this context, the Connective Action framework provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how digital activism operates. It demonstrates how algorithmic systems differentiate the visibility of activist campaigns, how individual interactions translate personal motivation and content creation into collective action, and how digital activism functions within a flow-based visibility economy rather than structured organizations. As such, Connective Action renders abstract concepts like algorithmic optimization, user-centered engagement, and digital citizenship tangible, aiding both the analysis of cases and the explanation of why contemporary digital activism is organized around personal narratives (Papacharissi, 2015).

2.1. Personalized Action Frames

Personalized Action Frames are frameworks that shape individuals' participation in social movements based on their personal motivations and experiences. Unlike traditional collective action frames, they emphasize that participants act according to their own values, stories, and social contexts rather than the overarching identity of the movement.

They are individually focused: participants contribute to the movement through their personal narratives, experiences, and emotions. They have networked diffusion: shared content—tweets, images, or videos—circulates via algorithms to other users, creating collective impact without centralized coordination. They are flexible and customizable: each individual can craft their own narrative and choose their own mode of participation. They have a binding effect: individual contributions trigger participation from others, making the movement visible and impactful. This dimension highlights that activism is increasingly organized around personal

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

motivations rather than collective identity. Participants spread the campaign by sharing their own stories, experiences, and content. For example, in the #FridaysForFuture campaign, a single user's supportive post on social media can inspire others to participate, generating broad collective impact without central coordination. In this respect, Personalized Action Frames provide a crucial theoretical lens for analyzing digital activism and algorithmic visibility in this study.

Organizationally Enabled Networks

Another dimension of the Connective Action framework, Organizationally Enabled Networks, explains the relationship between individual participation and centralized organization in digital activism. These are networks created by organizations that support, guide, or facilitate individual participation on digital platforms. While encouraging collective action, these networks also provide strategic goals, resources, or coordination, bridging the gap between personal participation and organized movement. Key features of this structure include organizational support, networked architecture, coordination, strategy, and collective impact (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Individual users become part of the movement through the resources and guidance offered by NGOs, campaign groups, or institutions. Participants connect with one another via frameworks, tools, or platforms provided by these organizations. Organizations help coordinate individual contributions, optimize visibility, and maintain message consistency to achieve campaign objectives. As a result, individual actions can reach wider audiences and generate collective impact even without centralized planning.

Hashtag campaigns, in particular, leverage loose and flexible structures that allow individuals to share their own content and contribute to the movement's diffusion. For example, in the #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter campaigns, NGOs and activists encouraged participants to share personal experiences using the affordances of digital platforms, rather than relying on centralized coordination. This approach created broad, dynamic digital networks.

Organizationally Enabled Networks are therefore networks that promote individual participation while providing a strategic, resource-supported organizational framework. Together with Personalized Action Frames, they represent the mechanisms that combine the individual and organized dimensions of digital activism.

Bridging Connective and Platform-Based Activism: From Individualized Participation to Platform-Mediated Mobilization

The Connective Action framework provided a powerful lens for understanding how digital activism spread through individuals up until the mid-2010s. It illustrates how personal motivations can translate into collective impact across digital networks and how this process unfolds (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). However, certain limitations became apparent during this period. Participation often became overly

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

individualized, movements were loosely organized, and low-effort forms of online engagement—commonly referred to as slacktivism or clicktivism—limited the long-term effects and tangible outcomes of these movements (Tufekci, 2017; Morozov, 2009; Halupka, 2014).

At the heart of these limitations lie platform governance and the visibility economy of digital platforms. Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and emotionally-driven algorithms shape and control access to collective action, determining who sees what and how widely content spreads (Pariser, 2011; Bucher, 2018).

Some movements, such as #OccupyWallStreet, #DirenGeziParkı, and the early stages of BlackLivesMatter, initially spread quickly through the personal networks and shares of individuals. Yet, this spread could be limited by the algorithms and visibility controls of digital platforms. This illustrates that contemporary digital activism requires not only individual initiative but also a strategic approach to leveraging platforms.

Emerging as a subtype of digital activism, slacktivism refers to online engagement through digital and social media platforms. A blend of “slacker” and “activism,” this phenomenon—also known as clicktivism—typically involves low-effort, symbolic online actions. Examples include liking or sharing posts, signing online petitions, or using hashtags.

Critics argue that slacktivism has limited impact if online actions are not accompanied by offline participation and tangible efforts (Gladwell, 2011; Halupka, 2014; Karpf, 2010; Shulman, 2009). Morozov (2009) defines slacktivism as “online activism that makes participants feel good without producing political or social impact,” portraying participants as under the illusion that symbolic engagement alone can create real change.

Slacktivism is criticized for taking minimal risks and exerting little effort. Morozov (2009) labels it “the ideal activism for a lazy generation,” while Halupka (2014) highlights that individuals often engage in such acts primarily for moral satisfaction. Though this form of participation may ease personal conscience, its broader societal impact is limited.

Nevertheless, early interpretations of slacktivism were more positive. Christensen (2011) notes that in periods when young people organized independently and without hierarchical structures, low-cost online participation played an effective, supportive role in grassroots movements. Over time, however, comparisons with traditional activism shifted perceptions, prompting critical evaluation regarding efficacy and impact.

Recent studies question this reductionist view of slacktivism. In hybrid activism models, where online and offline engagement are combined, slacktivism can serve as both a trigger and a supportive mechanism (Rotman et al., 2011; Vegh, 2003). Enjolras and colleagues (2013) link this transformation to the technological evolution

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

of digital platforms: the shift from Web 1.0's limitations to Web 2.0, and discussions around Web 4.0 today, has expanded opportunities for participation and enabled effective digital campaigns.

Slacktivist actions can function effectively to attract public attention, influence media agendas, and foster collective awareness. For younger generations, such actions can serve as initial steps toward political engagement, laying the groundwork for deeper involvement (Zoonen & De Ridder, 2011; Štětka & Mazák, 2014). Yet, the reality remains that “you cannot save the rainforest with a single click”—slacktivism alone has limited capacity to produce tangible social change.

These limitations, along with the evolving nature of digital activism, suggest that while the Connective Action framework is valuable, contemporary digital activism also demands more organized, platform-based explanations that account for the strategic and algorithmic dynamics of online mobilization.

Shift Toward Platform-Based Activism (2018–2024)

After 2018, digital activism began to move beyond the individual-centered Connective Action approach, adopting a more platform-based orientation. During this period, social media and other digital platforms became central tools that determine the visibility and impact of movements. Individual contributions remain important; however, algorithms, filter bubbles, and content promotion mechanisms play a critical role in deciding which messages reach broad audiences (Pariser, 2011; Bucher, 2018).

In platform-based activism, organizations and campaign groups provide tools and strategies that guide users' individual contributions. This allows personal shares to translate into collective impact and increases the movement's visibility without centralized coordination. Hashtag campaigns, visual content, and viral posts emerged as the main instruments of digital activism during this period.

This transformation also responds to the limitations of slacktivism. Low-effort online participation can now be supported by platform strategies to achieve broader impact, with users' contributions optimized algorithmically. Consequently, the 2018–2024 period represents a phase in which digital activism reshaped the balance between individual participation and collective impact, highlighting the importance of platform-based strategies and algorithmic visibility.

Platforms as Gatekeepers

Digital activism is no longer determined solely by participants' motivations; it is increasingly shaped by platforms' algorithmic preferences and governance structures. Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X control which users see content, which messages spread, and which interactions are prioritized, thereby managing the visibility of digital activism (Kreiss & McGregor, 2019; Klinger & Svensson, 2018).

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

In this context, platforms function not just as tools but as active actors shaping movements within the framework of platform governance. Algorithms optimize user interactions and content distribution, determining which campaigns go viral and which remain limited in reach. This demonstrates that activists' strategic planning is now heavily dependent on the visibility and restriction mechanisms of digital platforms.

Algorithmic Culture and Mediation of Activist Content

In recent years, the production and circulation of culture have increasingly relied on algorithmic processes rather than human decision-making. Striphas (2015) defines this transformation as algorithmic culture. Today, algorithms determine which information becomes visible, which content is prioritized, and how cultural symbols are classified. This development has shifted the understanding of culture from being shaped publicly and collectively to one in which digital platforms are not merely spaces that host content but active actors that reproduce social norms and values (Gillespie, 2014).

This algorithmic guidance affects not only cultural practices but also the operation of digital activism. The visibility of content—what reaches a wide audience and what remains in the background—is largely determined by platform algorithms (Bucher, 2018). Consequently, the success of a digital campaign no longer depends solely on the quality of its message or its sharing strategy; algorithmic mechanisms have become a critical factor.

This process is referred to in the literature as algorithmic mediation and is one of the central mechanisms shaping the visibility of digital activism (Gillespie, 2014; Bucher, 2018). By selecting which content appears in user feeds, algorithms indirectly influence the development of public agendas (Klinger & Svensson, 2018). Therefore, the circulation of activist content depends not only on user interest but also on the technical preferences and limitations of the platform.

- Shadow banning: reducing the visibility of content or users without their knowledge,
- Content suppression: preventing certain messages from spreading,
- Moderation bias: some content is disproportionately restricted due to political, cultural, or institutional biases in content moderation processes (Gorwa et al., 2020; Jhaver et al., 2019).

These practices can significantly limit the reach of campaigns, especially those focused on political, environmental, or social inequality issues.

In this framework, digital activism is shaped not only by content production and sharing but also by the datafication of activism and algorithmic visibility processes (Rogers, 2013; Tufekci, 2015). For instance, an environmental campaign promoted through specific hashtags may quickly gain traction, but if algorithmic priorities change, the campaign can suddenly lose visibility.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

As a result, activists are now responsible not only for generating messages but also for understanding the platform logic. Producing content that maximizes engagement, developing hashtag strategies, and aligning with platform policies have become essential for sustaining digital activism (Vaidhyanathan, 2018; Penney, 2017). However, the structural opacity and constant evolution of algorithms make these strategies inherently unpredictable.

In conclusion, algorithmic culture and algorithmic mediation have become decisive factors in the success of digital activism. Producing content alone is no longer sufficient; how algorithms evaluate content, who it reaches, and which platform rules apply directly shape the visibility and societal impact of digital movements. Consequently, digital activism has increasingly evolved into a strategic and technical practice that must adapt to platform logic (Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018; Tufekci, 2015).

Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Emotional Algorithms

Platform-based activism is closely linked not only to content production but also to how the digital environment users encounter is shaped. Among the key elements of this environment are filter bubbles and echo chambers. Algorithms analyze the content that users have previously clicked on, liked, or shared and then repeatedly show similar messages. As a result, users remain within a content flow that confirms their existing beliefs rather than being exposed to diverse perspectives (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017).

This phenomenon has a dual effect on activist campaigns. On one hand, messages easily reach an already interested audience and can generate strong engagement. On the other hand, access to groups with differing viewpoints is limited, which can weaken the goal of societal transformation.

Moreover, content flows on digital platforms are shaped not only by information relevance but also by emotional responses. Emotional algorithms prioritize content that elicits stronger reactions such as anger, surprise, fear, or hope (Bucher, 2018; Bozdog, 2013). Consequently, content with high emotional impact gains visibility, while solution-oriented, informative, or more measured messages may remain in the background. For instance, dramatic images in environmental campaigns can spread rapidly, whereas technical information may not achieve the same level of visibility.

These three factors demonstrate that digital activism today involves more than simply producing messages. Activists aiming to make their campaigns visible and reach wide audiences must develop strategies that account for both platform algorithms and user behavior (Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018; Tufekci, 2015).

In short, contemporary digital activism depends not only on crafting the “right” message but also on understanding how that message is circulated by the platform. Consequently, activism has evolved into a strategic process that encompasses analyzing platform mechanisms as much as content itself.

Characteristics of Platform-Based Activism

Platform-based digital activism exhibits distinct mechanical and strategic features that shape the process of generating impact in digital environments. These features require activists not only to produce content but also to continuously engage with algorithms to gain visibility.

Visibility Labor

In platform-based activism, being visible is more than just sharing a message. Activists expend ongoing effort to ensure their content stands out in digital spaces. This labor involves strategically planning the visual aesthetics, rhythm, format, music, hashtags, and even the timing of posts (Abidin, 2020). Such effort is referred to as visibility labor, representing the often invisible yet highly impactful work activists perform to gain digital prominence.

For example, producing short and fast-paced videos on TikTok, using popular sounds, or creating Instagram Reels with trending filters and music can facilitate algorithmic promotion. In other words, activists must carefully plan not only what they communicate but also how they share it.

Strategic Algorithmic Tactics

Strategies in platform-based activism are developed in alignment with the logic of social media algorithms. These tactics aim to enhance content visibility and maximize engagement:

- Hashtag stacking: Using multiple relevant hashtags to increase the likelihood of content discovery (Penney, 2017).
- Duet / Repost usage: Responding to or sharing other users' content on TikTok or X/Twitter to strengthen viral effects (Cotter, 2021).
- Cross-platform amplification: Sharing content simultaneously across platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter to expand reach (Jin et al., 2022).
- Trend hijacking: Associating activist messages with current trends or popular hashtags to gain algorithmic prominence and boost engagement (Bucher, 2018).

Platform Incentive Structures

Different social media platforms offer structures that encourage specific user behaviors and types of content. TikTok, for instance, promotes creativity and shareability through sound, remixing, and challenge cultures. Instagram prioritizes short, visually focused, easily consumable Reels, while X/Twitter amplifies viral potential and engagement through speed, sensationalism, and discussion-centered content.

Activists who understand these structures can optimize their content strategies according to the algorithmic logic of each platform, thereby increasing both visibility and potential societal impact (Abidin, 2020; Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

Concrete Examples of Platform-Based Activism

Between 2018 and 2024, digital activism increasingly evolved toward a platform-based structure, a trend supported not only by theoretical frameworks but also by observational data. As discussed in previous sections, the Connective Action approach successfully explains individual-based participation, in which participants come together in a flexible, networked structure without strict hierarchies or central organization. However, excessive personalization, low-effort online participation forms (slacktivism/clicktivism), and algorithmic visibility constraints have highlighted limits to the sustainability and impact of movements (Tufekci, 2017; Morozov, 2009; Halupka, 2014; Bucher, 2018). This reality requires digital activists to do more than produce content—they must strategically understand platform logic, algorithmic governance, and the visibility economy.

#MeToo: The #MeToo movement, a prominent example of feminist digital activism, illustrates fluctuations in visibility through the strategic use of hashtags and viral content. Activists produced content while considering users' sharing behaviors and interactions. Nevertheless, platform algorithms limited the visibility of some content, shaping the scope of the movement (Mendes et al., 2018). This case demonstrates that digital activism operates in direct interaction with platform logic, and visibility is not determined solely by content quality.

#BlackLivesMatter: Campaigns on X/Twitter and Instagram provide key examples of how algorithms shape content visibility. Platform algorithms amplified certain posts to reach wider audiences (algorithmic amplification) while suppressing others (algorithmic suppression), directly affecting how users perceived the movement's message. This demonstrates that digital activism requires strategic engagement with algorithmic processes rather than mere content production (Freelon et al., 2018).

Climate Movements (#FridaysForFuture, #ClimateStrike): Youth-led climate movements illustrate the effective use of visibility labor and algorithmic strategies on platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Activists optimized their content in line with recommendation systems and trending mechanisms, successfully capturing young audiences' attention and raising societal awareness (Betsill & Jones, 2021).

Local Case Studies (Turkey): In the Turkish context, the #DirenGeziParki movement provides an early example of platform-dependent visibility strategies. Activists employed various techniques to optimize content visibility and engagement, such as using multiple relevant hashtags, sharing content simultaneously across platforms, and designing posts with visually and rhythmically appealing elements. These strategies helped ensure the movement's messages reached wider audiences (Kızılcelik, 2020; Gneş, 2021).

These cases collectively show that digital activism has moved beyond purely individual or community-based participation. It has become a strategic process operating in interaction with platform algorithms, requiring deliberate planning to maximize both visibility and social impact.

Case Studies and Empirical Literature Context

This study examines three selected cases to concretize the dynamics of platform-based digital activism. These cases provide a framework for understanding how algorithmic culture, the visibility economy, and platform practices influence activist mobilization, as discussed in academic literature. Each case connects theoretical and methodological insights by reviewing relevant scholarly research.

#MahsaAmini Protests: The #MahsaAmini protests have emerged as a significant area of research in digital activism, generating a broad range of studies across multiple disciplines. Marks (2023) provides a detailed analysis of how the protests were organized via social media and how online communities formed. Similarly, studies published in Open Access Journals demonstrate how the protests spread across digital networks using Twitter data. The online discourse dimension has been further explored by Khorramrouz, Dutta, and KhudaBukhsh (2023) through stance analysis of Persian Twitter content. The social and political context of the movement is discussed by Çalhan (2023), highlighting how the protests redefined state-society relations. Media representation has also been investigated; Esmaeili (2024) analyzes coverage in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, revealing how international media framed the protests, while Özdemir and Akdağ (2024) examine the relationship between local and international media presentation and social mobilization. Hashtag activism features prominently in the literature: Cai (2023) analyzes the catalytic impact of the #WomenLifeFreedom campaign on social media, and Tzampazi (2023) provides a theoretical framework on digital feminism and cyber activism. Supporting this, Turkish studies such as Asa (2023) illustrate the protests as an important example of the intersection between new social movements and social media.

#NoKings Movement (USA): The #NoKings movement, advocating democratic norms and mobilizing against authoritarian tendencies, attracted significant media and public attention, yet peer-reviewed academic studies remain limited. Existing sources largely consist of journalism reports, analyses of the movement's organizational structure, and civil society documents. According to Britannica, on 14 June 2025, millions participated in protests across approximately 2,100 cities. The movement's official website emphasizes underlying democratic concerns and the role of civil society and progressive groups (nokingsmovement.com). Media analyses discuss the size and resources of groups involved in organizing the protests. Press and civil society documentation indicate that the movement adopted a nonviolent protest strategy focused on defending democratic institutions and called for mass participation. However, systematic academic analyses of social media data, including hashtag and stance analysis or long-term societal impact, remain scarce, positioning the #NoKings case as a "research gap" in the literature.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

#StopAsianHate Campaign (USA, 2021–present): The #StopAsianHate campaign exemplifies platform-focused activism, visibility labor, and emotion-driven participation. Lyu, Fan, Xiong, and Komisarchik (2021) demonstrate, through Twitter analysis, that the rise of the hashtag showed geographic and demographic variations linked to societal perceptions of hate crimes. Tong, Li, Bei, and Zhang (2022) analyze #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate together, showing that while both movements intersect through emotional themes, solidarity calls, and social justice narratives, platform interaction dynamics differ. Cao, Lee, Sun, and De Gagne (2022) conducted qualitative content analysis of 31,665 tweets from May 2021, identifying five dominant themes structuring the movement's online discourse. Jeon and Kim (2023) applied network analysis to examine interactions between #StopAsianHate and #BlackLivesMatter following spa attacks in Atlanta, showing that user engagement concentrated on specific topics. Shahin and Hou (2025) highlight how actors like BTS and right-wing digital provocateurs shaped engagement levels. Beyond Twitter, TikTok has become a critical space; CTDA-based studies show Asian/American women creating digital solidarity through emotion- and experience-based video content. Xie, Liu, and Cheng (2023) identify “reflection” strategies as a prominent form of activism, while Lee and Jang (2024) demonstrate that negatively emotional tweets are more likely to be retweeted, with collective anger and concern playing a central role in digital circulation.

This cumulative body of literature shows that the #StopAsianHate movement demonstrates a multi-layered digital activism practice across Twitter and TikTok, encompassing emotion, visibility, community-building, and algorithmic attention structures. It provides a significant empirical basis supporting the theoretical framework of digital activism adopted in this study.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach and conducts a comprehensive content analysis grounded in the literature on digital activism, platform governance, algorithmic culture, and the attention economy. Both theoretical literature (Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018; Tufekci, 2017; Striplhas, 2015; Noble, 2018) and empirical studies on selected contemporary international hashtag campaigns have been examined.

The methodological framework of the study aims to evaluate how the #MahsaAmini, #NoKings, and #StopAsianHate cases gained visibility within the digital ecosystem, interacted with platform algorithms, and shaped political and social mobilization. Therefore, the case analyses do not merely provide descriptive accounts but integrate concepts derived from the literature to establish a cohesive analytical framework. Each case is examined in relation to platform-specific algorithmic rules, user strategies, and political opportunity structures.

Case Study 1: Mahsa Amini Protests (Iran, 2022) – Algorithmic Culture and Digital Activism

The death of Mahsa Amini while in the custody of Iran's “Guidance Patrol” on September 16, 2022, sparked widespread protests across the country. Centered

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

around the slogan “Women, Life, Freedom,” this movement organized not only in the streets but also within digital spaces provided by social media, forming a hybrid model of protest that combined physical and digital mobilization. Symbolic acts, such as women cutting their hair, burning their headscarves, and challenging religious authorities, created a profound impact both domestically and internationally.

The protests were predominantly led by Generation Z, whose technological literacy, digital strategies, and networked culture shaped the movement. According to reports from the Iranian Human Rights Activists News Agency, 530 protesters lost their lives, and young female activists became targets due to their social media activity (e.g., Hadis Najafi, Sarina Esmailzadeh, Nika Shakarami). These outcomes underscore the direct intersection of digital activism and physical risk.

With a median age of 31.7, Iran’s Generation Z—born after September 11 and largely distant from state narratives—developed a collective identity grounded in freedom of expression, digital rights, bodily autonomy, and individual liberties (Dagres, 2022). They engaged with global cultures via the internet, shaping political imagination. Low voter turnout in the 2021 elections (48.8%) and high rates of invalid ballots highlighted the regime’s legitimacy crisis (Statista, 2023a–b). Additionally, an estimated 4 million Iranians in the diaspora amplified the movement globally via TikTok and Instagram, increasing its visibility (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009).

TikTok as a Protest Space:



Figure 1. Screenshot of a hair-cutting act that went viral on TikTok (4.8M likes, 28.1K comments, 22.9K shares), representing one of the symbolic digital representations of the Mahsa Amini protests

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

TikTok's short-video format (15 seconds–3 minutes) and algorithmic recommendation system played a critical role in the protest process. Interactive features such as “Duet” and “Stitch” enabled rapid replication and memetic reproduction of content (Shifman, 2013). Memetic culture refers to the spread and sharing of cultural ideas, behaviors, or symbols through memes—a collective form of digital cultural expression.

For young activists, TikTok became more than a content-sharing or entertainment platform. It allowed participants to safely display physically risky acts, such as cutting hair or removing headscarves, thereby expressing a “hidden self” while simultaneously contributing to collective goals like raising social awareness and enhancing global visibility. Thus, TikTok functioned as a platform where personal experiences were made visible, and political and social messages could circulate (Fan et al., 2023).

The use of music further reinforced the emotional dimension of protest in the digital space (Danaher, 2010; Taylor, 2000). English subtitles enabled the movement to transcend national borders, reaching international audiences and facilitating the emergence of affective publics—communities united around shared emotions that could collectively participate in the movement (Lee & Abidin, 2023).

Despite TikTok being banned in Iran, young activists accessed the platform via VPNs, while diaspora participants helped circumvent censorship by sharing content. This dynamic highlighted the tension between algorithms and state surveillance (Salartash, 2022).

Algorithmic Culture and the Visibility Economy:

The Mahsa Amini protests provide a concrete illustration of algorithmic culture and the visibility economy. As Striphos (2015) notes, algorithms are an inseparable part of cultural practices, determining which content becomes visible. Gillespie (2018) and Bucher (2018) emphasize that platform algorithms shape political processes by amplifying or suppressing content. Tufekci (2017) argues that digital mobilization relies on users operating within experience spaces shaped by algorithms.

In the Mahsa Amini case, activists employed strategies such as hashtag campaigns, coded language, and alternative platform usage to enhance visibility and circumvent censorship. These practices demonstrate how algorithms function as critical actors in determining content prominence (Striphos, 2015; Milan, 2015). The case highlights that digital activism extends beyond content creation, requiring a strategic understanding of algorithmic logic.

In conclusion, the #MahsaAmini protests offer a holistic view of the technical and social dimensions of digital activism. They reveal how algorithms influence political, cultural, and emotional outcomes and demonstrate how the integration of platform strategies can increase global visibility and resist censorship mechanisms.

Case Study 2: #NoKings – U.S. Digital Infrastructure and Evidence-Based (EB) Activism

Emerging during Donald Trump's reelection campaign in 2025, the #NoKings movement represents a digitally organized protest against government overreach and disinformation policies. The movement employed a hybrid activism model, combining online and offline mobilization, and serves as a significant case for analyzing the role of digital activism in modern democratic debates and social movements (Tufekci, 2017; Milan, 2015).



Figure 2. Screenshot of the YouTube livestream page on the #NoKings official website (nokings.org).

The movement centralized its online organization through the nokings.org website, which provides participants with information on movement goals, current activities, and resources. The site exemplifies core features of evidence-based (EB) digital activism, including:

1. **Host Toolkit and Educational Materials:** The site provides local organizers with event planning guides, graphic materials, QR codes, and “Know Your Rights” handbooks. These resources demonstrate that digital activism extends beyond message dissemination, offering infrastructure to organize participants and facilitate safe protests (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2018).

2. **QR Codes and Hybrid Mobilization:** QR-coded materials are employed both in physical spaces and online, integrating offline and online mobilization. This strategy enhances the movement’s digital visibility and creates a sharing network aligned with algorithmic recommendation systems (Beer, 2017; Noble, 2018).

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

3. Symbolism and Visual Identity: The color yellow is used as a symbol of unity and solidarity on the website, transforming into a memetic strategy that enables rapid recognition and viral potential on social media (Shifman, 2013).

4. Livestreaming and Continuity: Features such as live streams and “What’s Next” sections support the movement’s continuity and engagement across online and offline dimensions. This highlights the role of digital activism in sustaining long-term mobilization (Lee & Abidin, 2023).

5. Security and Participant Rights: “Know Your Rights” guides and security planning tools inform activists about potential legal and safety risks in digital and physical spaces. This illustrates the strategic application of EB-based activism in contexts with limited democratic freedoms and civil liberties (Salartash, 2022).

Hashtag Strategies and Digital Visibility:

#NoKings extended its activism across platforms such as BlueSky, Reddit, and Signal. Al-Khateeb et al. (2025) found that the movement utilized 6,079 different hashtags simultaneously, forming 68 distinct online communities. PageRank analysis revealed that the most central hashtags structurally shaped the movement’s narrative, indicating that users collectively produced meaning within algorithmically mediated environments. In this way, the website and social media platforms together materialize the visibility economy and algorithmic culture aspects of EB-based digital activism (Striphas, 2015; Tufekci, 2017; Milan, 2015).

In conclusion, the #NoKings website functions as a central infrastructure that integrates the movement’s digital and physical mobilization strategies. Toolkits, live streams, educational resources, and symbolic content combine the technical and social dimensions of EB-based digital activism, enhancing the movement’s global visibility. This case demonstrates that digital activism extends beyond content production, showing how integration with algorithmic recommendation systems and participatory infrastructure can amplify the impact of social movements.

Case Study 3: #StopAsianHate Movement – U.S. (2021–Present)

The #StopAsianHate movement emerged in response to rising hate crimes and racist rhetoric targeting Asian and Asian American communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Atlanta spa shootings on March 16, 2021, in which eight individuals were killed—six of whom were Asian women—served as a catalytic event that significantly increased the movement’s visibility. Organizers declared March 26, 2021, as the “National Day of Action and Healing” and provided participants with a Day of Action Toolkit, including guidance for online actions, sharing strategies, and educational resources.

The image shows the hashtag #STOP ASIAN HATE in a large, bold, italicized, black sans-serif font. The text is arranged in three lines: #STOP on the first line, ASIAN on the second line, and HATE on the third line. The entire graphic is set against a white background with rounded corners and a subtle drop shadow.

Figure 3. #StopAsianHate: Hashtag Activism.

The movement employed data-driven and strategically planned digital activism using social media and digital tools. The #StopAsianHate hashtag was widely used across Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms, enabling community members to share both personal experiences and collective responses, fostering societal self-awareness (Fiveable, 2025; NCSU, 2023). Structural analyses indicate that the movement is organized around social justice, emotional responses, and collective action themes. Accordingly, the movement's digital strategies exemplify evidence-based (EB) digital activism, where content production and sharing are intentionally designed to enhance visibility, engagement, and societal awareness rather than functioning solely as spontaneous reactions.

Hashtag Activism and Social Media Use:

- The #StopAsianHate hashtag was extensively utilized across Twitter, Instagram, and other platforms (Fiveable, 2025).
- Hashtag usage facilitated not only expressive acts but also collective sharing of emotional experiences, reinforcing societal self-awareness (NCSU, 2023).
- Structural analyses using LDA and topic modeling reveal that the movement is organized around themes of social justice, emotional response, and collective action (Tong, Li, Li, Bei, & Zhang, 2022).

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Education and Resource Provision:

- Institutional actors, such as the USC Equity Research Institute, provided informative digital resources for community members (USC Dornsife, 2021).
- Artistic and personal content shared via Instagram and other platforms strengthened community solidarity and emotional expression (Imaginations Journal, 2022).

Celebrity and Cultural Influence:

- Support from prominent Asian and Asian American figures increased the movement's visibility and contributed to wider community awareness (DOAJ, 2022).
- Fan communities and digital networks amplified the campaign's message to broader audiences.

Algorithmic Culture and Visibility Economy:

- Hashtag-based content was amplified by platform algorithms, increasing overall visibility.
- Celebrity endorsements and the simultaneous structural deployment of hashtags enhanced the movement's algorithmic visibility and viral potential (Tufekci, 2017).
- Integration between digital actions and physical protests enabled the visibility economy to function across both online and offline spaces.

Societal and Institutional Impacts:

- The movement drew public attention to anti-Asian racism and stimulated national-level dialogue (RSN, 2023).
- Activist pressure contributed to support for legal initiatives addressing hate crimes (DOAJ, 2022).
- Academic research highlights the critical role of digital actions in fostering social awareness and emotional solidarity (NCSU, 2023).
- Long-term visibility and sustainability remain debated; some analyses indicate that the hashtag's impact diminished following its initial viral surge (Anthro Magazine, 2023).

In conclusion, the #StopAsianHate movement demonstrates how social media and hashtag activism, within an EB-based digital activism framework, can play a central role in amplifying both testimonial and collective action efforts. Celebrity support and community engagement enhanced algorithmic visibility and viral potential, while integration between digital and physical activism increased both symbolic and tangible impact. Nevertheless, long-term sustainability and integration with institutional structures remain ongoing challenges.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Findings

This study analyzed the post-2010 transformation of digital activism, with particular attention to the visibility-driven, platform-based activism model that has become increasingly prominent between 2018 and 2024, through the examination of three cases: #MahsaAmini, #NoKings, and #StopAsianHate. The findings indicate that each movement exhibits hybrid and multi-layered mobilization shaped both by user strategies and by the algorithmic functioning of platforms.

The case studies demonstrate that the visibility economy has become a central dynamic of contemporary digital activism. Across all three movements, strategic practices aimed at increasing visibility were systematically applied: preference for engagement-enhancing formats (short videos, emotional narratives, text-image combinations), use of trending sounds and popular hashtags, alignment with platform traffic, and cross-platform amplification (simultaneous sharing across Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter). These practices suggest that digital activism is no longer merely about message production; rather, it entails visibility labor, requiring activists to align their content with the algorithmic logic of platforms. The unpredictability of which content will be amplified or suppressed compels activists to develop strategic sharing practices to maximize reach.

Algorithmic culture emerges as a critical mechanism shaping content dissemination. In all three cases, algorithms act as the most powerful actor determining the audience and reach of activist content. Even when posts have viral potential, mechanisms such as algorithmic suppression, shadow banning, political content restrictions, and prioritization of emotional content directly influence visibility.

During the #MahsaAmini protests, many TikTok and Instagram posts went viral quickly, yet the reach of certain videos fluctuated. This prompted users to adopt tactics to circumvent censorship, including coded language, translation subtitles, and migration to alternative platforms.

The findings also show that Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) connective action model remains relevant today, though now intertwined with platform-based activism. In all three cases, sharing personal stories, experiences, and emotional reactions, combined with networked, individualized campaign structures rather than centralized organizations, created viral effects as personal narratives propagated through digital networks, enabling movements to reach broad audiences. This phenomenon is especially evident in the #StopAsianHate campaign, where content in the form of videos, texts, and memes allowed the formation of affective publics.

The case studies further reveal a hybrid mobilization model in which digital action occurs in parallel with physical protests:

- In the #MahsaAmini protests, street actions by youth were globalized through TikTok.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

- In the #NoKings movement, livestreams, toolkits, and QR codes provided digital infrastructure for physical protests.
- In the #StopAsianHate campaign, online solidarity integrated with national-level physical demonstrations.

This hybrid structure indicates that digital activism has transcended the online/offline divide, operating across both virtual and physical spheres to achieve collective impact.

Discussion

The findings indicate that digital activism has evolved from the interaction-focused participation characteristic of the 2010s into a structure increasingly dependent on platform logic. Hashtag campaigns remain significant; however, visibility is now largely shaped by algorithmic priorities. As a result, activism has become inherently dependent on strategic timing, trend hijacking, aesthetic and format compatibility, and the generation of emotional intensity. While these conditions allow for rapid mobilization, they also render activism more fragile and contingent.

The study further suggests that slacktivism, long criticized in the literature, can function

as a triggering form of participation within the digital ecosystem. Specifically, affective solidarity in the #StopAsianHate campaign, rapid information dissemination in the #NoKings movement, and global awareness generation during the #MahsaAmini protests illustrate that low-effort online engagement plays a critical role during the early stages of campaigns. While slacktivism alone does not produce social transformation, it provides momentum that amplifies the reach and visibility of movements.

At the same time, the research highlights structural risks arising from activism's dependence on algorithms. These risks include the potential suppression of content for political reasons, the shaping of movements by platform policies, the over-amplification of emotionally charged content leading to polarizing narratives, restricted exposure to diverse perspectives due to filter bubbles, and the increasing burden of visibility labor on activists. Collectively, these dynamics suggest that the democratizing potential of digital activism is mediated—and in some cases constrained—by the control exerted by platform companies.

By integrating the connective action framework with platform-based activism theories, this study proposes a comprehensive model explaining the emerging logic of digital activism. According to this model, activism operates through a combination of individualized participation, algorithmic mediation, visibility labor, and platform governance. This approach demonstrates that understanding contemporary digital activism requires not only a social movement perspective but also an interdisciplinary reading that incorporates media studies, platform economics, and communication ecology.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, understanding the algorithmic logic of platforms is crucial for the effectiveness of digital activism. Producing content that aligns with recommendation and ranking systems can enhance the visibility and viral potential of campaigns (Gillespie, 2018; Bucher, 2018). Cross-platform strategies and simultaneous mobilization increase reach while reducing dependence on a single platform, thereby strengthening resilience against restrictive mechanisms (Tufekci, 2017). Interaction-oriented content, such as short videos, compelling visuals, and targeted hashtags, increases the likelihood of being amplified by algorithms, expanding the participant base for campaigns (Bucher, 2018).

Given the dynamic nature of platform policies, regular monitoring of content moderation, shadow banning, and censorship is critical for the operational effectiveness and sustainability of campaigns (Noble, 2018; Beer, 2017). Collaborations with civil society organizations, academic institutions, and media actors can further enhance both online and offline visibility, reinforcing the transformative power of digital activism and the link between digital mobilization and tangible societal impact (Milan, 2015).

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how digital activism has transformed, showing that contemporary social movements are increasingly dependent on the operational logic of platforms. The findings clearly indicate that activists adapt to the attention- and engagement-driven structures of platforms to gain visibility, and that algorithmic culture has become a central factor shaping the direction of mobilization.

Evidence from the three case studies reveals that contemporary digital activism constitutes a holistic ecosystem characterized by: personalized narratives at its core, algorithmic visibility as a determinant of campaign success, a hybrid structure integrating online and offline activities, structural constraints imposed by platform governance, and a transformative potential capable of reaching broad audiences rapidly.

In conclusion, digital activism can no longer be understood merely as a traditionally organized movement. Instead, it operates as a visibility-driven struggle mediated by algorithms, shaped through individual participation, and requiring constant strategic optimization. This study contributes to both theoretical and practical understandings of this transformation, highlighting the interplay between platform dynamics, collective action, and the evolving mechanisms of digital mobilization.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses on three major platforms (TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter/X), leaving activism practices on other digital platforms such as Reddit, YouTube, Discord, and Bluesky outside the scope. In particular, in the Iranian context, platform policies, content removal practices, and state-sponsored censorship limited access to original posts, making it difficult to fully track fluctuations in visibility. The reliance on qualitative methods also restricted the

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

ability to quantitatively examine hashtag density, network relations, or algorithmic recommendation mechanisms. Furthermore, the rapidly evolving nature of platform algorithms means that the findings may not fully generalize to future digital ecosystems. Finally, the study considers only three cases; including additional examples from different geographic and political contexts could provide a broader comparative perspective.

References

- Abidin, C. (2020). Mapping Internet celebrity on TikTok: Exploring attention economies and visibility labours. In D. B. Marshall & J. Redmond (Eds.), *A networked self and birth, life, death* (pp. 1–20). Routledge.
- Anderson, P. (2021, October 7). The movement behind a shrinking hashtag. *Anthromagazine*. <https://anthromagazine.org/the-movement-behind-a-shrinking-hashtag/>.
- Anduiza, E., Cantijoch, M., & Gallego, A. (2009). Political participation and the Internet: A field essay. *Information, Communication & Society*, 12(6), 860–878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802282720>
- Asa, B. (2023). #MahsaAmini protestoları: Yeni toplumsal hareketler ve sosyal medya. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 27(3), 80–102.
- Beer, D. (2017). The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(1), 1–13.
- Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>
- Bozdag, E. (2013). Bias in algorithmic filtering and personalization. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 15(3), 209–227. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-013-9321-6>
- Bucher, T. (2018). *If... then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Britannica. (2025, Haziran 18). No Kings movement: A new era of democratic protest. *Britannica.com*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/No-Kings-movement>
- boyd, d. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites* (pp. 39–58). Routledge.
- Cai, Y. (2023). The catalyzing effect of #WomenLifeFreedom on digital feminist activism. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 32(2), 210–227.
- Cao, J., Lee, S., Sun, X., & De Gagne, J. C. (2022). Understanding #StopAsianHate: A qualitative content analysis of tweets. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 33(5), 523–533.
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Polity Press.
- Chadwick, A. (2017). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Christensen, H. S. (2011). Political activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or political participation by other means? *First Monday*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v16i2.3336>
- Cotter, K. (2021). “Shadowbanning is not a thing”: Black box gaslighting and the power to independently know and credibly critique algorithms on TikTok. *New Media & Society*, 23(9), 2513–2531. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820929322>

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

- Dagres, H. (2022, Ekim 14). Generation Z and Iran's new protest movement. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/generation-z-and-irans-new-protest-movement/>
- Davenport, T. H., & Beck, J. C. (2001). *The attention economy: Understanding the new currency of business*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). *Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the Internet age*. MIT Press.
- Enjolras, B., Steen-Johnsen, K., & Wollebæk, D. (2013). Social media and mobilization to offline demonstrations: Transcending participatory divides? *New Media & Society*, 15(6), 890–908. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812462844>
- Esmaeili, S. (2024). International media framing of the #MahsaAmini protests: A content analysis of The New York Times and The Guardian. *Journal of International Communication*, 30(1), 99–115.
- Fiveable. (2025). #stopasianhate. Fiveable. <https://www.fiveable.com/>
- Freelon, D., McIlwain, C. D., & Clark, M. D. (2018). Quantifying the power and consequences of social media protest. *New Media & Society*, 20(3), 990–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816676646>
- Garrett, R. K. (2006). Protest in an Information Society: A review of literature on social movements and new ICTs. *Information, Communication & Society*, 9(2), 202–224.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism*. Pluto Press.
- Ghorashi, H., & Boersma, M. (2009). Iranian diaspora and the new media: From political action to cultural participation. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 29(1), 82–94. <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201X-2008-045>
- 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* (pp. 167–194). MIT Press.
- Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.
- Gladwell, M. (2011). Small change: Why the revolution will not be tweeted. In S. Seidman, & A. Rapoport (Eds.), *Communication and social change* (pp. 193–198). Routledge.
- Gorwa, R., Binns, R., & Katzenbach, C. (2020). Algorithmic content moderation: Technical and political challenges in the automation of platform governance. *Big Data & Society*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951719897945>
- Güneş, M. (2021). Gezi Parkı olaylarında sosyal medya kullanımı ve toplumsal hareketler: Dijital aktivizmin görünürlük stratejileri. *Akdeniz Üniversitesi İletişim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 36, 320–340.
- Halupka, M. (2014). Clicktivism: A systematic heuristic. *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1944-2866.POI360>
- Hansen, H. K., & Sørensen, N. N. (2017). *The visibility economy: Politics of digital attention*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of empire*. Penguin Press.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

- Howard, P. N., & Hussain, M. M. (2013). *Democracy's Fourth Wave? Digital Media and the Arab Spring*. Oxford University Press.
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M., & boyd, d. (2015). *Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics*. Polity Press.
- Jenkins, H., et al. (2013). *Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics*. Polity Press.
- Jeon, J., & Kim, S. (2023). Network analysis of #StopAsianHate and #BlackLivesMatter after the Atlanta spa shootings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 140, 107626. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107626>
- Jhaver, S., Ghoshal, S., Bruckman, A., & Gilbert, E. (2019). Online harassment and content moderation: The case of Blocklists. *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction*, 25(2), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3185593>
- Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2022). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. In S. V. Jin (Ed.), *Celebrity capital: Redefining celebrity using Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok* (pp. 67–89). Emerald Publishing.
- Joyce, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Digital activism decoded: The new mechanics of change*. International Debate Education Association.
- Kaun, A., & Uldam, J. (2018). Digital activism: After the hype. *New Media & Society*, 20(6), 2099–2106.
- Karatzogianni, A. (2015). *Firebrand waves of digital activism 1994–2014: The rise and spread of hacktivism and cyberconflict*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karpf, D. (2010). Online political mobilization from the advocacy group's perspective: Looking beyond clicktivism. *Policy & Internet*, 2(4), 7–41. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-2866.1102>
- Khorramrouz, F., Dutta, S., & KhudaBukhsh, A. R. (2023). Stance analysis of Farsi tweets during the #MahsaAmini protests. *PeerJ Computer Science*, 9, e1521. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj-cs.1521>
- Kızılçelik, S. (2020). Dijital aktivizm ve Gezi Parkı protestoları: Twitter üzerinden bir analiz. *İletişim Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8(2), 67–90. <https://doi.org/10.48116/iletisimarastirmalari.2020.8.2.67>
- Klinger, U., & Svensson, J. (2018). The end of media logics? On algorithms and agency. *New Media & Society*, 20(12), 4653–4670. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818779750>
- Kreiss, D., & McGregor, S. C. (2019). The “arbiters of what our voters see”: Facebook and Google's struggle with policy, process, and enforcement around political advertising. *Political Communication*, 36(4), 529–547. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2019.1619639>
- Lee, J., & Jang, S. M. (2024). Emotional valence and retweet dynamics in #StopAsianHate: The centrality of collective anger and anxiety. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(1), 55–71.
- Lyu, Y., Fan, X., Xiong, M., & Komisarchik, M. (2021). Geographic and demographic patterns in #StopAsianHate on Twitter. *Social Media + Society*, 7(3), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211038817>
- Marks, S. (2023). Iranian women's digital activism and the #MahsaAmini protests. *Feminist Media Studies*, 23(4), 789–805.

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, J. (2018). #MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(2), 236–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506818765318>
- Milan, S. (2015). When algorithms shape collective action: Social media and the dynamics of cloud protesting. *Social Media + Society*, 1(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115622481>
- Morozov, E. (2009). The brave new world of slacktivism. *Foreign Policy*, (19 Mayıs). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-new-world-of-slacktivism/>
- Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. New York University Press.
- No Kings Movement. (2025). About the movement. nokingsmovement.com. <https://nokingsmovement.com>
- North Carolina State University. (2023, March 1). #StopAsianHate study sheds light on overlooked aspect of activism. NC State News. <https://news.ncsu.edu/2023/03/activism-and-stopasianhate/>
- Özdemir, B., & Akdağ, T. (2024). #MahsaAmini protestolarının medya temsili: Yerel ve uluslararası perspektifler. *İletişim ve Toplum*, 16(1), 122–139.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). Affective publics and structures of storytelling: Sentiment, events, and mediality. *Information, Communication & Society*, 19(3), 307–324.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Press.
- Penney, J. (2017). Social media and symbolic action: Exploring participation in the context of the Umbrella Movement. *Social Media + Society*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116680002>
- Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*. Basic Books.
- Rogers, R. (2013). *Digital methods*. MIT Press.
- Rotman, D., Vieweg, S., Yardi, S., Chi, E. H., Preece, J., Shneiderman, B., ... & Glaisyer, T. (2011). From slacktivism to activism: Participatory culture in the age of social media. In *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 819–822). <https://doi.org/10.1145/1978942.1979149>
- Serttaş, A., Gürkan, H., & Dere, G. (2025). Synthetic Social Alienation: The Role of Algorithm-Driven Content in Shaping Digital Discourse and User Perspectives. *Journalism and Media*, 6(3), 149.
- Shahin, S., & Hou, M. (2025). Influence dynamics in #StopAsianHate: The role of celebrities and digital provocateurs. *Digital Society Studies*, 6(1), 45–62.
- Shah, D., et al. (2013). Hacktivism and digital protest: The ethics of digital dissent. *Journal of Information Ethics*, 22(1), 5–20.
- Shulman, S. W. (2009). The case against mass e-mails: Perverse incentives and low quality public participation in U.S. federal rulemaking. *Policy & Internet*, 1(1), 23–53. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-2866.1010>
- Statista. (2023a). Iran: Voter turnout in presidential elections from 1980 to 2021. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201333/iran-presidential-election-turnout/>

Algorithms and Digital Activism: The Impact of Algorithms on Social Movements and Activism on Digital Platforms

Statista. (2023b). Iran: Number of invalid votes in presidential elections from 1980 to 2021. Statista.
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201344/iran-presidential-election-invalid-votes/>

Tong, X., Li, Y., Li, J., Bei, R., & Zhang, L. (2022). What are people talking about in #BlackLivesMatter and #StopAsianHate? Exploring and categorizing Twitter topics emerging in online social movements through the latent Dirichlet allocation model [Preprint].

Tufekci, Z. (2015). Algorithmic harms beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent challenges of computational agency. *Colorado Technology Law Journal*, 13(203), 203–218.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.

Tzampazi, E. (2023). Digital feminism and cyberactivism: Theoretical perspectives from the #MahsaAmini movement. *Cyberfeminism Review*, 5(1), 51–67.

USC Equity Research Institute. (2021, March 11). #StopAsianHate #StopAAPIHate resources. USC ERI.
<https://dornsife.usc.edu/eri/2021/03/11/stopasianhate-stopaapihate-resources/>

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018). *Antisocial media: How Facebook disconnects us and undermines democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.

Van Laer, J., & Van Aelst, P. (2010). Internet and social movement action repertoires: Opportunities and limitations. *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(8), 1146–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691181003628307>

Vegh, S. (2003). Classifying forms of online activism: The case of cyberprotests against the World Bank. *International Sociology*, 18(1), 29–51.

Xie, S., Liu, Z., & Cheng, T. (2023). Reflection as an activism strategy in TikTok's #StopAsianHate campaign. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 2420–2442.

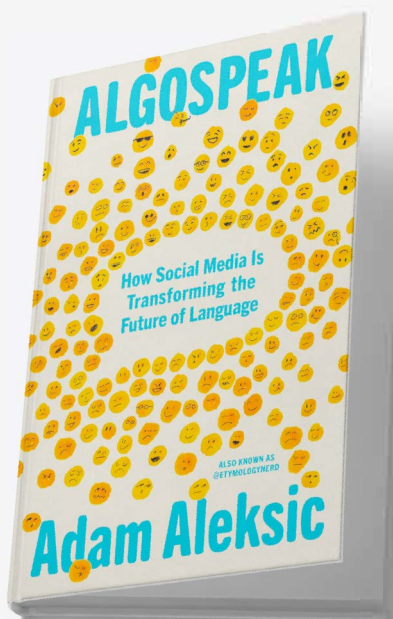
van Zoonen, L., & De Ridder, S. (2011). On being 'slacktivists': Young people, the Internet and political participation. In B. Loader & D. Mercea (Eds.), *Social media and democracy: Innovations in participatory politics* (pp. 165–184). Routledge



Communication Papers

Media Literacy & Gender Studies

BOOK REVIEW



Adam Aleksic. Algospeak: How Social Media Is Transforming the Future of Language. Penguin Random House, 2025. 247 páginas. ISBN: 978-0593804070

**Hasan GÜRKAN, Assoc. Prof. Dr.
Radio, Television and Cinema,
Istinye University, Istanbul, Türkiye
gur.hasan@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3805-9951**

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has reshaped not only communication practices but also the fundamental structures of contemporary language. In *Algospeak*, Adam Aleksic offers a timely and theoretically rich analysis of how algorithmic moderation systems produce new linguistic strategies and alter meaning-making processes in online environments. The book situates itself at the intersection of linguistics, digital communication, and platform studies, making it highly relevant for scholars examining the socio-technical conditions of present-day discourse.

Aleksic argues that the emergence of *algospeak*—a set of linguistic modifications developed to bypass algorithmic filters—represents a structural transformation in digital communication. Automated moderation systems, designed to detect sensitive or harmful content, unintentionally generate incentives for users to alter language. Terms such as “unalive,” “SA,” or “spicy content” exemplify euphemisms adopted to ensure visibility, avoid demonetization, or maintain access to algorithmic distribution mechanisms.

The book documents these practices across major platforms including TikTok, YouTube, and Reddit. Aleksic’s analysis reveals how these linguistic adaptations spread, stabilize, and eventually normalize within broader online cultures. He argues that *algospeak* should not be understood merely as slang, but rather as a systemic outcome of platform governance, algorithmic authority, and user negotiation.

A central contribution of the book is the conceptualization of language as a field increasingly regulated by algorithmic systems. Unlike traditional forms of censorship, algorithmic moderation operates implicitly; users often modify their linguistic choices without fully understanding the underlying mechanisms. Aleksic’s concept of “algorithmic pragmatics” captures this shift effectively.

The book successfully bridges linguistic analysis with media theory. Aleksic provides empirical examples illustrating how digital affordances—hashtags, captions, recommendation logic—shape linguistic evolution. This interdisciplinary approach enriches current debates within communication studies.

Aleksic emphasizes that the rise of *algospeak* has affective and cultural implications, particularly for discussions related to trauma, sexuality, self-harm, and social inequalities. The book shows how euphemistic language can both enable expression and obscure the emotional clarity of sensitive conversations.

Algospeak is an important and timely book that deepens our understanding of how digital infrastructures influence communicative practices. Aleksic successfully demonstrates that language in the digital age is shaped not only by human interaction but also by algorithmic forces that condition visibility, circulation, and expressivity. For researchers interested in digital discourse, algorithmic culture, and platform governance, the book offers both conceptual clarity and empirical richness.