


INFLUENCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS ON THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

 <https://doi.org/10.63330/aurumpub.015-023>**Ana Gabriela Simões Thomé Santana¹****ABSTRACT**

This study addressed the influence of digital platforms on the contemporary media ecosystem, highlighting significant transformations in the production, distribution, and consumption of information. The main objective was to investigate how digital innovations have shaped interactions among various social actors, including traditional and digital media. The methodology employed was a bibliographic review, which enabled the exploration of central concepts and theories related to the topic, such as convergence culture and surveillance capitalism.

The research findings revealed that digital platforms act as intermediaries, democratizing access to information while also generating challenges such as the formation of informational bubbles and the spread of disinformation. The analysis of informational bubbles evidenced the tendency for users to be exposed to content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs, limiting the diversity of perspectives and contributing to social polarization. Furthermore, the study highlighted the emergence of disinformation, which affects not only news consumption but also trust in institutions and the quality of public debate. Transformations in journalism, driven by digitalization, demonstrated that content production must adapt to new forms of interaction and consumption, reinforcing the need for active citizen participation. Ultimately, the study concluded that a critical understanding of the media ecosystem is essential to promote a more plural and trustworthy informational environment, emphasizing the importance of media literacy strategies that empower citizens to navigate the digital environment consciously.

Keywords: Media ecosystem; Digital platforms; Disinformation; Journalism.

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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary media ecosystem has undergone profound and accelerated transformations, primarily driven by the advent of digital platforms, which significantly alter the dynamics of information production, distribution, and consumption. The convergence between traditional media—such as television, radio, and print press—and digital media—including social networks, news aggregators, and messaging apps—redefines not only how news and cultural content are consumed but also the very nature of journalism, communication, and civic participation. In this context, the media ecosystem ceases to be a linear and hierarchical space, transforming into a complex and interconnected network in which various social, technological, and institutional actors continuously interact, shaping the circulation of information and the construction of collective narratives (Castells, 2009; Jenkins, 2006).

This study aims to investigate the influence of digital platforms on the media ecosystem, analyzing how these technological innovations transform interactions among different social actors, news consumption, content production, and political and cultural participation. The research seeks to understand how the digitalization of information and media convergence contribute both to the democratization of access to information and to emerging challenges, such as the proliferation of fake news, the creation of informational bubbles, and the concentration of informational power in certain platforms (Pariser, 2011; Zuboff, 2019; Sunstein, 2001; Lazer et al., 2018).

Based on the theoretical contributions of Castells (2009) and Jenkins (2006), the investigation proposes to analyze the complexity of interactions among media, highlighting the emergence of the so-called “convergence culture,” in which the boundaries between producers and consumers of information become increasingly blurred. In this sense, the study seeks to understand how these transformations impact public opinion formation, social engagement, and civic participation in a context of increasing digitalization of communication.

The hypotheses raised include the possibility that, although digital platforms significantly expand access to information and promote greater social participation, they also concentrate informational power, influence individuals’ perception of reality, and reinforce social and cultural polarizations. The justification for conducting this study lies in the need to critically understand these communicational transformations, offering theoretical and practical support for analyzing the role of technologies in mediating social reality and building a more informed and conscious society.

The development of the study is structured into four main sections: (1) The definition of the media ecosystem and its layers, highlighting the interdependence between traditional and digital media; (2) The role of digital platforms, with emphasis on personalized curation practices and the phenomenon of surveillance capitalism; (3) The analysis of impacts on information circulation, including informational bubbles, filter bubbles, and disinformation; (4) Transformations in contemporary journalism, considering



changes in news consumption, content production, and civic participation. Each section aims to provide an integrated and critical understanding of the media ecosystem, relating theory and practice and contextualizing the current challenges of digital communication.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study consisted of a qualitative approach, focused on a bibliographic review of relevant books and academic articles concerning the influence of digital platforms on the media ecosystem. The choice of this method was justified by the need to explore theoretical and practical concepts that underpin the transformations in contemporary communication, allowing for a critical and contextualized analysis.

The research was divided into stages. Initially, a systematic search was conducted in academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Scopus, using keywords related to the central themes of the study, such as "media ecosystem," "digital platforms," "disinformation," and "journalism." This search resulted in the selection of books, articles, and case studies that address the interactions between traditional and digital media, as well as their social and cultural implications.

Subsequently, the works of prominent authors in the field, such as Manuel Castells, Henry Jenkins, Eli Pariser, and Shoshana Zuboff, were analyzed. The critical analysis of these texts enabled the identification of patterns and trends related to media convergence, the impact of digital platforms on information circulation, and the formation of informational bubbles. The study also considered the evolution of journalism in response to these changes, highlighting the need for adaptation to new dynamics of consumption and interaction.

Finally, the synthesis of the collected data and reviewed theories resulted in the development of an integrated perspective on the impacts of digital platforms on the media ecosystem. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that emerge in this new communicational landscape. The analysis was structured into sections that systematically addressed the different aspects of the topic, culminating in a critical reflection on the future of information in an increasingly connected world.

DEVELOPMENT

MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

The concept of the media ecosystem has become established as a way to understand the complexity of interactions among different forms of media and the processes of information circulation in contemporary society. According to Castells (2009), the media ecosystem can be understood as an interconnected set of media, platforms, and information flows, in which diverse actors—from large



communication conglomerates to individual users—play active roles in the production, distribution, and consumption of content. In this context, media ceases to be a linear transmission system, as in traditional models, and becomes a dynamic network of interactions, where information and narratives circulate in a non-hierarchical manner, crossing geographic and cultural boundaries.

Jenkins (2006) reinforces this perspective by introducing the concept of “convergence culture,” which describes the growing integration between traditional and digital media. For the author, the contemporary media ecosystem is marked by the convergence of technologies, platforms, and consumption practices, allowing the public to actively participate in the process of producing and circulating information. In this sense, the media ecosystem is not merely a space for content dissemination, but also an environment of interaction, collaboration, and co-creation, where the barriers between producers and consumers become increasingly blurred.

The structure of the media ecosystem is, therefore, multifaceted, composed of different layers that interconnect. In the first layer are traditional media, such as television, radio, and print press, which still play a relevant role in agenda-setting and legitimizing information. These media continue to strongly influence public opinion, especially in contexts where digital access is limited or segmented. In a second layer, digital media emerge, including social networks, blogs, podcasts, and video-on-demand platforms, which offer a highly interactive and participatory environment. Here, users not only consume content but also produce and share information, expanding the reach of narratives and challenging traditional hierarchies of media power (Castells, 2009; Jenkins, 2006).

The interaction between traditional and digital media reveals significant transformations in how information is managed and perceived. On one hand, traditional media have adopted digital strategies to expand their presence, such as online portals, live broadcasts, and integration with social networks. On the other hand, digital platforms often appropriate content produced by traditional outlets, sharing it at an accelerated pace and sometimes modifying it according to algorithms that prioritize engagement and popularity. This process creates a feedback loop in which news and information circulate simultaneously across multiple channels, making the media ecosystem more complex and dynamic than ever before (Jenkins, 2006; Castells, 2009).

Moreover, media convergence also promotes a democratization of access to information, allowing previously marginalized voices to find space for expression. However, this expansion of possibilities brings significant challenges, such as the spread of disinformation and the formation of informational bubbles, in which individuals are predominantly exposed to content aligned with their pre-existing beliefs. Therefore, understanding the media ecosystem requires not only an analysis of technologies and platforms but also a reflection on their social, cultural, and political impacts, especially in the formation of public opinion and the construction of collective narratives (Castells, 2009; Jenkins, 2006).



In summary, the media ecosystem represents a complex and interconnected space in which traditional and digital media coexist and interact, influencing both the production and consumption of information. This interconnection implies challenges and opportunities for contemporary communication, requiring researchers, professionals, and citizens to develop a critical understanding of information flows and the role of technologies in mediating social reality. Understanding the media ecosystem is, therefore, essential to interpret the communicational transformations of contemporary society and to reflect on the future of information in an increasingly connected world.

DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Digital platforms constitute a central element of the contemporary media ecosystem, functioning as intermediaries between producers and consumers of information. Unlike traditional media, these platforms offer highly interactive environments in which users actively participate in the creation, sharing, and dissemination of content. According to Pariser (2011), social networks, news aggregators, and messaging apps have the power to shape perceptions of reality by presenting information selected according to users' individual interests and behaviors—a phenomenon the author refers to as the “filter bubble.” This mechanism creates a personalized yet limited experience, in which individuals tend to consume content aligned with their pre-existing opinions, thereby reducing exposure to divergent perspectives.

Zuboff (2019) complements this analysis by discussing the concept of surveillance capitalism, in which digital platforms use behavioral data to segment, monetize, and influence the public. Every interaction, click, and share is monitored, allowing algorithms to determine which content will be prioritized and displayed to users. In this way, not only is information consumption shaped in a personalized manner, but the very production of news and content is influenced by metrics of engagement and popularity—often at the expense of depth or accuracy.

Social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (or X), and TikTok exemplify the capacity of these platforms to connect millions of people simultaneously, becoming predominant channels for the circulation of news and cultural trends. News aggregators like Google News and Feedly function as automatic curators, gathering content from multiple sources and presenting it to users based on algorithms that prioritize relevance, interest, and frequency of access. Messaging apps such as WhatsApp and Telegram enable rapid and direct dissemination of information within private groups, expanding the reach of messages and often complicating fact-checking due to the closed and encrypted nature of these platforms (Pariser, 2011; Zuboff, 2019).

Personalized curation performed by algorithms is a central point of analysis regarding digital platforms. These systems not only decide what each user will see but also create unique informational



trajectories, shaping habits, preferences, and even political and social attitudes. While this process offers an individualized and efficient experience, it also raises significant ethical and social concerns, including the potential for manipulation, reinforcement of existing biases, and the creation of informational bubbles that limit public debate and the diversity of opinions (Zuboff, 2019).

In light of this scenario, it becomes evident that digital platforms play a dual role: on one hand, they democratize access to information and expand social participation; on the other, they concentrate power over information flows, influencing behaviors, opinions, and individual choices. Understanding the operation of these platforms is therefore essential to analyze the effects of the contemporary media ecosystem, as well as to develop media literacy strategies that enable users to navigate the digital environment critically and consciously.

In summary, digital platforms—by integrating social networks, news aggregators, and messaging apps, and by employing personalized curation algorithms—radically transform the production, distribution, and consumption of information. They redefine the role of the public and journalism, creating opportunities for engagement and civic participation, but also challenges related to information quality, diversity of voices, and the critical development of users (Pariser, 2011; Zuboff, 2019).

IMPACTS ON INFORMATION CIRCULATION

The circulation of information in the contemporary media ecosystem has been profoundly impacted by digital platforms and the algorithms that regulate access to content. One of the most studied phenomena in this context is that of informational bubbles, also known as filter bubbles. Sunstein (2001) describes these bubbles as environments in which individuals are predominantly exposed to information that reinforces their pre-existing opinions, with little or no confrontation with divergent perspectives. This mechanism, amplified by social networks and algorithmic curation systems, tends to create fragmented realities in which groups of users share homogeneous worldviews, strengthening polarization and hindering public dialogue.

The impact of informational bubbles is not limited to the subjective perception of reality; it directly affects public opinion formation, decision-making, and trust in institutions. By receiving only content that confirms personal beliefs, individuals tend to reinforce prejudices, reduce their capacity for argumentation, and become more vulnerable to external manipulation. Furthermore, the segmentation of the public into bubbles makes it difficult for essential information to reach a broader audience, creating gaps in collective knowledge and fragmenting social debate (Sunstein, 2001).

Another phenomenon closely linked to the circulation of information on digital platforms is disinformation, including the spread of fake news. Lazer et al. (2018) emphasize that the ease of sharing, combined with the speed of social networks, makes the digital environment highly conducive to the



propagation of false news. Unlike traditional journalism, which relies on editorial processes and fact-checking, digital platforms allow any user to publish content that can quickly reach millions of people, often without verification. The combination of curation algorithms, emotional engagement, and rapid dissemination creates a cycle in which incorrect information spreads faster than corrections or clarifications, amplifying disinformation and its social effects.

The impact of disinformation goes beyond the informational field, affecting political, social, and cultural processes. Studies indicate that the spread of false news can influence elections, social mobilizations, and even adherence to public health behaviors, as seen in vaccination campaigns or health crises. Moreover, the coexistence of reliable and false information in the same digital space increases the complexity of critical analysis, requiring users to develop advanced media literacy skills and critical thinking to identify trustworthy sources and understand broader contexts (Lazer et al., 2018).

In summary, the impacts on information circulation in the contemporary media ecosystem are profound and multifaceted. Informational bubbles and filter bubbles limit the diversity of perspectives and contribute to social polarization, while disinformation and fake news threaten trust in information and affect individual and collective decision-making. Understanding these phenomena is essential for developing media education strategies, fact-checking policies, and regulations for digital platforms, aiming for a more pluralistic, critical, and trustworthy informational environment (Sunstein, 2001; Lazer et al., 2018).

TRANSFORMATIONS IN JOURNALISM

Contemporary journalism has undergone profound transformations, driven by the emergence of digital platforms and the convergence of traditional and digital media. Vidigal de Carvalho (2017) highlights that news consumption has ceased to be linear and centralized—as was the case with printed newspapers, radio, and television—and has become fragmented, personalized, and multidirectional.

Users now access information through social networks, news aggregators, and messaging apps, often selecting content that aligns with their individual interests and consumption habits. This shift implies that journalistic content production must adapt to faster, more visual, and interactive formats, prioritizing audience attention in environments saturated with information.

Ortega y Gasset (1997) had already pointed out the need for journalism to keep pace with social and technological transformations in order to remain relevant. In the current context, this adaptation involves not only diversifying channels and formats but also incorporating new digital resources such as infographics, short videos, and live broadcasts, which aim to engage the audience in a more direct and participatory manner. This evolution transforms journalism into a more dynamic process, in which the



audience ceases to be a mere passive receiver and begins to act as a co-producer of content—sharing, commenting, and, in many cases, creating their own narratives.

Media convergence plays a central role in this scenario, integrating different platforms and technologies into a single informational flow. This convergence is not limited to technological aspects; it also involves editorial practices and strategies, relationships with the audience, and new forms of monetization and content distribution. In this sense, the line separating traditional and digital media becomes increasingly blurred, allowing journalistic content to circulate simultaneously across multiple channels, reaching diverse audiences and amplifying the impact of information (Vidigal de Carvalho, 2017).

Another relevant aspect of the transformations in journalism is the strengthening of civic participation. With digitalization and the interactivity provided by platforms, citizens have come to play an active role in the production and circulation of information—whether through comments, social media posts, or the creation of blogs and podcasts. This participation not only expands the diversity of voices and perspectives but also challenges journalism to deal with content produced outside traditional structures, requiring new approaches to fact-checking, mediation, and ethical responsibility (Ortega y Gasset, 1997; Vidigal de Carvalho, 2017).

Taken together, the transformations in journalism reflect a paradigmatic shift in how information is produced, distributed, and consumed. The adaptation to new technologies and formats, media convergence, and the emphasis on civic participation demonstrate that contemporary journalism must balance speed, interactivity, and credibility, while preserving its role in informing, shaping opinion, and fostering public debate. Understanding these changes is essential for analyzing the impact of digital platforms on the media ecosystem and for developing strategies that ensure responsible, pluralistic, and democratic communication in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

The analysis presented throughout this study reveals the complexity and dynamism of the contemporary media ecosystem, marked by the intersection of traditional and digital media. The research confirmed that digital platforms play a central role in the production, distribution, and consumption of information, profoundly transforming the way citizens interact with media narratives. Drawing on the theories of Castells and Jenkins, it was possible to understand that the media ecosystem is not merely a space for content dissemination, but an interactive and collaborative environment where different actors—from large communication conglomerates to individual users—play active roles.

However, this democratization of access to information brings with it significant challenges. The phenomenon of informational bubbles, described by Sunstein, demonstrates how digital platforms can



limit exposure to divergent perspectives, reinforcing prejudices and polarizing opinions. The spread of disinformation, driven by the speed and ease of sharing on social networks, also emerged as a central concern, affecting trust in institutions and the quality of public debate. These aspects underscore the urgent need to develop media literacy strategies that enable citizens to discern between reliable and false information, promoting a more pluralistic and critical informational environment.

Furthermore, the transformations in contemporary journalism, discussed by Vidigal de Carvalho, reveal that journalistic content production must adapt to new forms of consumption and interaction. The strengthening of civic participation, driven by digital platforms, challenges journalism to consider voices outside traditional structures, requiring new approaches to fact-checking and ethical responsibility.

Therefore, understanding the changes in the media ecosystem is crucial not only for academic analysis but also for the formation of critical and informed citizens.

In summary, the findings of this study highlight the interconnection between media and its implications for public opinion formation and the construction of collective narratives. As society moves toward an increasingly connected future, the ability to navigate the digital environment critically becomes essential. Thus, it is imperative that researchers, communication professionals, and citizens unite in the pursuit of a media ecosystem that, while promoting participation and diversity, also ensures the quality of information and the integrity of public debate.



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