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Algorithmic Gatekeeping and Journalistic Ethics: A Cross-Regional Analysis of Public-Facing Media Texts

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ABSTRACT

As digital platforms increasingly shape how news is distributed and encountered, algorithmic systems have become important gatekeepers of public information. This study examines how public-facing media texts frame algorithmic gatekeeping and its implications for journalistic ethics across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. Guided by media framing theory, the study uses qualitative textual analysis to examine 23 media texts published between 2018 and 2026. The analysis identified four major themes: algorithmic amplification of misinformation, gatekeeping crisis and loss of accountability, threats to democracy and civil dialogue, and media pushback and adaptation strategies. Findings show that algorithms are commonly framed as powerful and often opaque intermediaries that influence news visibility, intensify engagement-driven information environments, and reduce traditional newsroom control over distribution. However, regional differences emerged. North American texts emphasized misinformation, polarization, and public discourse; African texts focused more strongly on information sovereignty, media sustainability, and unequal platform power; Asian texts emphasized search dependence, publisher revenue, copyright, and visibility; while European texts highlighted regulation, transparency, and publisher independence. Across regions, proposed responses included adapting content to platform environments, strengthening direct audience relationships, developing publisher-controlled technologies, increasing algorithmic accountability, and pursuing policy intervention. The study demonstrates that algorithmic gatekeeping is framed not simply as a technological change, but as a broader struggle over journalistic authority, visibility, economic sustainability, public trust, and democratic communication.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital platforms has fundamentally transformed how news is produced, distributed, circulated, and consumed. Traditionally, journalists and editors acted as gatekeepers who selected, filtered, and organised information before it reached the public, using professional norms such as newsworthiness, accuracy, objectivity, public service, and ethical responsibility (White, 1950; Tuchman, 1972; Deuze, 2005). However, in contemporary digital news environments, this gatekeeping role no longer belongs only to journalists and editors. News selection and circulation are now shaped by a wider network of actors, including audiences, platforms, search engines, recommendation systems, and algorithmic infrastructures (Wallace, 2018; Tandoc & Vos, 2016). Algorithms have therefore become powerful intermediaries between information and the public. From content curation to distribution, algorithmic systems influence what stories users see, what gains traction, and what is ignored (Wallace, 2018; DeVito, 2017). A story may be carefully reported and edited, but its public life can depend on whether it is ranked by a search engine, recommended by a platform, shared by users, or made visible through personalized feeds. This further strips traditional journalists of the ability to fully control the flow and visibility of information. Instead, that power is

increasingly contested between news organizations and technology platforms.

While algorithms are not inherently harmful, they have introduced ethical tensions into journalism and information distribution, especially since both systems function under different ethical standards. Journalism is expected to serve the public through verification, accountability, independence, fairness, and social responsibility (Deuze, 2005; Singer, 2007). Platform algorithms, however, are often designed around engagement, personalization, data extraction, advertising, and commercial growth (van Dijck & Poell, 2013; Helmond, 2015). When news visibility is shaped by systems whose operations are often opaque and commercially driven, questions of accountability, transparency, bias, and public interest become more urgent (Diakopoulos, 2015; Dörr & Hollnbuchner, 2017; Abdulrauf *et al.*, 2025).

Although algorithms and digital platforms have introduced important benefits, including broader participation, faster information sharing, personalized access, and the amplification of voices outside traditional media structures, they have also created serious challenges for journalistic ethics (Hermida, 2010; Dörr & Hollnbuchner, 2017). These challenges include weakened editorial control, opaque forms of news selection, the spread of misleading content, declining trust, and growing

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dependence on technology companies whose priorities do not always align with journalism's public mission (Dörr & Hollnbuchner, 2017; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). As news ecosystems continue to evolve, the question of who controls the flow of information has become more urgent and contested.

This paper examines how algorithmic gatekeeping is framed in public-facing media texts and how these texts describe its implications for journalistic ethics. Using media framing theory, this paper analyzes how selected media and newsroom texts frame the relationship between algorithms, news visibility, and misinformation across four regional contexts: Africa, Asia, North America, and Europe.

The study is guided by three research questions. First, how do public-facing media texts frame the relationship between algorithms and journalistic ethics? Second, how do these texts describe the shift from traditional gatekeeping to algorithmic influence in news production and distribution? Third, what strategies do these texts identify as ways news organisations across regions respond to, adapt to, or resist the pressures of the algorithmic era?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Algorithmic Gatekeeping and Journalism

One of the early promises of algorithmic curation was that it could reduce human bias in news selection (Carlson, 2018). Journalists and editors have long been criticized for subjectivity in deciding what stories deserve prominence. Because of this, algorithmic systems were sometimes imagined as more neutral and objective ways of organizing information. However, this promise is now contested. Carlson (2018) argues that algorithmic judgment should be understood as different from journalistic judgment because it challenges the assumption that human subjectivity is always the problem and computational judgment is automatically more objective. In this sense, replacing editorial judgment with algorithmic judgment does not remove judgment from journalism but rather relocates judgment into systems that are often less visible and less accountable.

The main debate goes beyond the use of algorithms in journalism to the ethical and sustainability issues it introduces to journalism, especially as algorithms increasingly shape the conditions under which journalism is seen and trusted. In digital news environments, news organizations often have to adapt to platform demands to reach audiences. This can push journalists toward headlines, formats, timing, and story choices that align with platform metrics. Research shows that audience analytics make audience behavior visible to journalists in real time, encouraging newsrooms to consider clicks, traffic, and engagement when making editorial decisions. Tandoc and Thomas (2015) argue that the use of audience metrics raises ethical concerns, as journalists may begin to treat audience clicks as a newsworthiness determinant. Recent studies have also raised concerns about algorithmic bias, editorial transparency, accountability, and public trust

as AI becomes increasingly integrated into journalism (Abdulrauf *et al.*, 2025).

Misinformation, Personalization, and Public Interest

Algorithmic gatekeeping is also connected to misinformation, polarization, and the decline of trust in news (Bakshy *et al.*, 2015; Guess *et al.*, 2023; Lazer *et al.*, 2018; Scheffauer *et al.*, 2024). Social media platforms have expanded participation by allowing more people to create, share, and respond to information outside traditional media structures (Hermida, 2010). At the same time, these platforms have also created conditions under which misleading information, conspiracy theories, hate speech, and highly emotional content can circulate quickly. While algorithms do not create misinformation or polarization, they can amplify these problems when engagement, speed, and emotional reaction become major signals for visibility. These concerns are also important in African and other developing democracies, where misinformation has been linked to declining public trust and challenges to civic and democratic participation (Chidozie, 2025). Similarly, the spread of misinformation on social media can weaken public discourse and civic trust, especially when corrective efforts struggle to keep pace with the speed and reach of false information (Olley & Ikerodah, 2025).

Personalization adds another important layer to this problem. Algorithmic systems use users' digital traces, including clicks, likes, shares, comments, subscriptions, browsing history, and time spent on content, to recommend information that fits individual interests (Raza & Ding, 2022). This can make news feel more relevant and accessible. However, it can also create tension between personal interest and public interest since journalism is expected to expose audiences to important and diverse information necessary for strong democratic life. Møller (2022) argues that algorithmic news recommendation can support journalism when it is designed with editorial values, diversity, and public responsibility in mind, but it can also weaken journalism when personalization is driven mainly by commercial or engagement goals.

Platform Power and Journalism

Another major concern is the financial and institutional power of technology companies over journalism. Platforms compete with news organizations for attention and advertising revenue while also controlling important pathways through which audiences access news. This creates an unequal relationship. News organizations may feel pressure to adapt their editorial and distribution practices to platform requirements, while digital intermediaries offer audience reach but also create long-term dependence and loss of control. Algorithmic gatekeeping should therefore be understood not only as a technological change, but also as a system of power that reorganizes the conditions under which news is produced, circulated, monetized, and made visible (Nielsen &

Ganter, 2018; Poell *et al.*, 2019).

Media Framing Theory

Media framing theory provides the theoretical framework for understanding how media organizations present algorithmic control over news and information distribution. Entman (1993) argues that the presentation and context of information influence how audiences perceive, interpret, and process public issues. Media framing theory has also been used to examine how media present emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. Nguyen and Hekman (2024) argues that news framing of artificial intelligence helps construct public meaning around automation, while Nguyen (2023) shows that media coverage of big data and AI often frames data risks through concerns such as surveillance, algorithmic discrimination, cybersecurity, and information disorder. Similarly, Ittefaq *et al.* (2025) show that AI coverage varies across countries, frames, and sentiments, suggesting that global media do not explain technological change in a single uniform way.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sampling Procedure

This study used a qualitative textual analysis approach to examine how public-facing media texts across Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America discuss algorithmic media, journalistic ethics, and strategies for adapting to or resisting the pressures of the algorithmic era. The sampling procedure was designed to capture regional variation while still allowing close reading of each text. The sampling process began by creating a regional sampling frame of media platforms from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. For each region, the researcher identified thirty public-facing outlets or platforms that regularly publish news, commentary, analysis, or industry-facing discussions about journalism, technology, platforms, artificial intelligence, or digital media. The researcher then organized the outlets by region and randomly selected three outlets from each region. Where possible, the selection included outlets from at least two countries within each region in order to

avoid relying on a single national media context.

After selecting the outlets, the researcher searched each outlet's website using keywords related to the study's focus. These keywords included "algorithms and journalism," "algorithmic gatekeeping," "AI and journalism," "news algorithms," "platforms and journalism," "journalistic ethics and algorithms," "media algorithms," "algorithmic accountability," "news personalization," and "platform power." The search focused on texts published between 2018 and 2026 in order to capture recent discussions of algorithmic influence in journalism and digital news environments.

The initial keyword search produced a total of 100 texts. The researcher then screened the texts for relevance. Texts were included if they directly discussed algorithms, artificial intelligence, platform power, news visibility, journalistic ethics, gatekeeping, misinformation, media trust, or how news organizations respond to algorithmic pressures. Texts were excluded if they mentioned algorithms or artificial intelligence only in passing, focused on unrelated uses of AI outside journalism or media, were published before the selected time period, were duplicates, or lacked sufficient substantive discussion to support textual analysis.

After this screening process, the final sample consisted of 26 texts across the four regions. This sample included articles with a range of publication types, including newspaper articles, magazine articles, and blogs. This sample was considered appropriate for qualitative textual analysis because it allowed the researcher to closely examine patterns in language, framing, ethical concern, and regional response. The final sample includes texts from media organizations like Premium Times, New York Times, Daily Maverick, DAIDAC, Tech Explore, Business Wire, AP News, The Tyee, Daily Maverick, International Business Times, Times Now, Scroll, Medianama, BBC, FIPP, Mirage News, PT Switzerland, Tech Policy Press, Journalism UK, Markaz Review, and Forbes.

Data Analysis

The final texts were coded for recurring patterns related to algorithmic gatekeeping, journalistic ethics, platform

Table 1: Description of Sampled Public-Facing Media Texts

Source ID	Outlet	Country	Source ID	Outlet	Country
NA-01	NYT				
U.S	AF-07	DAIDAC	Nigeria		
NA-02	Tech Explore	U.S	AS-01	IBT	Asia
NA-03	Business Wire	U.S	AS-02	Times Now	India
NA-04	AP News	U.S	AS-03	Scroll	India
NA-05	The Tyee	Canada	AS-04	Scroll	India
NA-06	Markaz Review	Canada	AS-05	Medianama	India/U.S
NA-07	Forbes	U.S	EU-01	BBC	U.K
AF-01	Daily Maverick	South Africa	EU-02	FIPP	U.K
AF-02	Daily Maverick	South Africa	EU-03	Mirage News	Denmark

AF-03	Daily Maverick	South Africa	EU-04	PT Switzerland	Switzerland
AF-04	Premium Times	Nigeria	EU-05	BBC	U.K
AF-05	Premium Times	Nigeria	EU-06	Tech Policy Press	U.K
AF-06	Premium Times	Nigeria	EU-07	Journalism UK	U.K
AF-07	DAIDAC	Nigeria			

Note. NA = North America; AF = Africa; AS = Asia; EU = Europe.

IBT = International Business Times

power, misinformation, democratic risk, and strategies of adaptation or resistance. The study employed an inductive coding approach, allowing codes and themes to emerge from the data rather than imposing fixed categories before analysis. During the primary coding stage, the analysis focused on eight categories: algorithmic control, misinformation and disinformation, accountability and transparency gaps, sensationalism, engagement-driven systems, threats to democracy and civil dialogue, media adaptation and resistance strategies, and differences in framing across regions and outlets.

During the secondary stage of coding, the primary codes were examined for relationships, overlaps, and recurring patterns. Through this process, related codes were grouped together and refined into four major themes that structure the findings of this study. The identified themes are;

Algorithmic Amplification of Misinformation: Captures how algorithms are discussed as engagement-driven systems that can promote misleading, false, emotional, or sensationalized content because such content attracts attention and interaction.

Gatekeeping Crisis & Loss of Accountability: Reflects how the shift from traditional journalistic gatekeeping to

algorithmic systems is framed as weakening accountability, transparency, editorial control, and ethical responsibility.

Threat to Democracy and Civil Dialogue: Captures how algorithmic systems are discussed as risks to democratic communication, journalism, and public dialogue, particularly when they shape visibility, intensify polarization, or narrow public debate.

Media Pushbacks and Adaptation Strategies: Addresses how media organizations, journalists, and other actors respond to algorithmic pressure through strategies of adaptation, resistance, accountability, audience education, transparency, and platform negotiation. These four themes were developed by combining related primary codes that intersected across the texts. The primary codes were therefore treated as subcategories nested within the broader themes, as shown below:

To establish intercoder reliability, two independent coders were consulted to code 10% of the sampled texts. The coders were provided with a coding guide that defined the main categories and offered examples of how each category should be identified in the texts. After coding, the results were compared to assess consistency, identify disagreements, and refine the coding scheme before the final round of analysis.

Table 2: Themes and Primary Codes

Major Theme	Related Primary Codes
Algorithmic Amplification of Misinformation	Algorithmic control; misinformation and disinformation; sensationalism; engagement-driven systems.
Gatekeeping Crisis and Loss of Accountability	Algorithmic control; accountability and transparency gaps; engagement-driven systems.
Threats to Democracy and Civil Dialogue	Algorithmic control; Threats to democracy; impact on journalism.
Media Pushback and Adaptation Strategies	Media adaptation and resistance strategies; differences in framing across regions and outlets.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected texts produced four themes in how media organizations discuss algorithms in relation to journalism and journalistic ethics. Across the texts, algorithmic power was described as new information gatekeepers, unseen editors, opaque systems, external media stakeholders, and powerful actors that shape news visibility. In several texts, algorithmic systems were also framed as pressures that threaten journalistic sustainability, weaken accountability, and reshape the democratic flow of information. These framings were grouped into four major themes: Algorithmic

Amplification of Misinformation, Gatekeeping Crisis and Loss of Accountability, Threats to Democracy and Civil Dialogue, and Media Pushback and Adaptation Strategies. Together, these themes answer the study's research questions by showing how public-facing media texts describe the ethical, institutional, and democratic consequences of algorithmic influence in journalism.

Theme 1: Algorithmic Amplification of Misinformation

The first theme, Algorithmic Amplification of Misinformation, addresses the first research question

on how public-facing media texts frame the relationship between algorithms and journalistic ethics. It captures how algorithms are discussed as engagement-driven systems that can promote misleading, false, emotional, or sensationalized content because such content attracts attention and interaction. Across the selected texts, misinformation was framed as a problem of visibility, where algorithmic systems can help harmful or misleading content travel faster and reach wider audiences.

Several texts described this problem through the language of engagement. For example, DAIDAC (AF-07) framed algorithms as systems “susceptible to amplifying hate speech, threats, cyberbullying, and false narratives.” The same text argued that because many algorithms are optimized for “likes, shares, comments, and time spent on content,” disinformation actors can exploit these systems through clickbait titles and emotionally charged images. Thus presenting misinformation as a predictable outcome of systems that reward attention and engagement.

A similar concern appeared in texts that linked algorithmic visibility to the weakening of journalistic quality. The BBC (EU-05) suggested that the quality of a story may matter less if the story is not “suited to the algorithm,” reflecting a broader fear that algorithmic systems may reward format, speed, emotional appeal, and platform compatibility over reporting quality or public importance. Several other texts described this engagement logic more directly. For example, PT Switzerland (EU-04) argued that “algorithms don’t care if a headline is true” but whether “it clicks,” adding that sensational content is often boosted because it triggers strong emotions such as fear, anger, or amusement.

This pressure also affects newsroom production and behavior. Business Wire (NA-03) captured this clearly when it described newsrooms as caught in a “tug-of-war between maintaining editorial integrity and adapting to a system that rewards sensationalism and immediacy.” Scroll (AS-03) similarly argued that platform pressure can encourage publishers to create weaker content and seek new tactics to manipulate search algorithms and improve visibility. These examples suggest that algorithmic amplification also creates pressure within the journalism field, as newsrooms and publishers try to remain visible in environments governed by platform metrics. Moreover, this pressure contributes to the blurring of boundaries between professional journalism and platform-optimized content creation. The BBC (EU-05) referred to this as the rise of “clicky” headlines, while The Tyee (NA-05) argued that creators who are not bound by time-consuming practices such as due diligence and fact-checking may gain an algorithmic advantage. Thus suggesting that algorithmic systems may reward fast and triggering headlines over journalistic routines of verification.

Finally, algorithmic amplification was also linked to echo chambers and filter bubbles. These texts argued that personalized feeds can limit exposure to opposing views and create spaces where misinformation circulates among users who already share similar beliefs. For example,

the BBC (EU-01) suggested that fake news can spread quickly when people inside a filter bubble share the same viewpoint, while the New York Times (NA-01) described algorithmic recommendation as a “rabbit hole” that can expose users to more extreme content. These texts show that misinformation is also a structural problem tied to personalization, recommendation, and repeated exposure.

Theme 2: Gatekeeping Crisis and Loss of Accountability

The second theme addresses the second research question: how do these texts describe the shift from traditional gatekeeping to algorithmic influence in news production and distribution? This theme captures how the shift from traditional journalistic gatekeeping to algorithmic systems is framed as weakening accountability, transparency, editorial independence, and ethical responsibility.

Across the texts, algorithms were framed as powerful gatekeeping systems that now shape information that reaches audiences. Forbes (NA-07) described the algorithm as “the most powerful media intermediary in the world,” while DAIDAC (AF-07) described AI-driven algorithms as “unseen gatekeepers” that determine what information and content individuals encounter online. Together, they present algorithms as powerful actors that influence perception, engagement, and public visibility.

This new information ecosystem was also framed as reducing newsroom control over news distribution. Premium Times (AF-06) argued that tech platforms control “what content is seen and what is buried,” leading to a “loss of control for news media over how and to whom their content is distributed.” Similarly, Forbes (NA-07) framed algorithmic distribution as a structural shift from editorial judgment to algorithmic visibility, where organizations must now earn attention through “signals and behavior” rather than traditional editorial routes. Under this kind of algorithmic control, Business Wire (NA-03) warned that “important news can be buried if it doesn’t meet the algorithm’s ever-changing criteria.” Beyond content filtering, algorithmic gatekeeping also determines the visibility of public-interest news, based on platform expectations.

This shift was also described as a movement away from journalistic principles and toward engagement-based visibility. PT Switzerland (EU-04) contrasted this with the old model, where “editorial teams chose what was newsworthy” and were guided by “journalistic ethics, public interest, and relevance,” with a new model where engagement becomes the dominant compass. In this framing, algorithms reward content that “hooks and keeps you scrolling,” even when that content is polarizing, controversial, or factually questionable. DAIDAC (AF-07) made a similar argument, stating that, unlike traditional gatekeepers, “no such systems exist for algorithmic gatekeepers,” making them significant drivers of misinformation and disinformation. Through these texts, algorithmic gatekeeping is seen as an accountability crisis since these distribution systems are not governed

by the same ethical expectations that guide professional journalism.

The texts also argued that algorithmic systems expose media organizations to unequal power relationships where newsrooms depend on platforms for visibility, traffic, and survival, while platforms do not depend on publishers in the same way. Business Wire (NA-03) captured this problem through complaints about the disappearance of news releases on digital platforms, arguing that as algorithms evolve, “the control over content distribution seems to slip further from human hands.” BBC (EU-05) gave one of the clearest examples of this imbalance when it described Facebook’s influence over newsroom and hiring decisions as so powerful that it became “the absent editor in the room.” It explained that Facebook’s algorithmic changes could instantly dictate editorial adjustments, often without warning or explanation. A radio journalist quoted in the text explained that newsrooms were first told audio stories would not work on social media, then later had to shift toward videos because platforms are now optimized for short videos. The opaque and proprietary nature of algorithmic systems also makes them difficult to challenge. PT Switzerland (EU-04) described most algorithms as “black-box systems” that are “opaque, proprietary, and immune to public scrutiny.” Scroll (AS-03) made a similar point about Google Search, explaining that although Google has documented some aspects of how its algorithms work, publishers still cannot know for sure why their content ranks or does not rank. It also argued that decisions about website credibility and ranking are ultimately made by the tech giant. This unequal power relation makes accountability difficult and forces news organizations to depend on these platforms’ rules, even as those rules are ever-changing and unclear.

Finally, algorithmic opacity was also tied to financial and institutional power. Premium Times (AF-06) argued that big tech is taking “an increasing share” of the media industry’s money and possibly its jobs, without being responsible “in proprietorship and accountability” for the information it disseminates. This, however, expands the gatekeeping crisis beyond visibility alone, arguing that algorithmic systems are also tied to revenue, ownership, responsibility, and survival. Therefore, algorithms shape news production and dissemination while operating outside the ethical, financial, and accountability structures that traditionally governed journalism.

Theme 3: Threats to Democracy and Civil Dialogue

The third theme captures how algorithmic systems are discussed as risks to democratic communication, journalism, and public dialogue, particularly when they shape visibility, intensify polarization, or narrow public debate. Across the selected texts, algorithmic power was also framed as a democratic problem influencing what citizens see, what issues gain attention, and how public conversations are organized.

Several texts connected algorithmic visibility to political

division and the weakening of civil dialogue. AP News (NA-04) reported that Facebook and Instagram algorithms have been criticized for “amplifying misinformation and ideological content” in ways that have “worsened the country’s political divisions.” It also emphasized that significant division can undermine confidence in democracy and democratic institutions by producing “affective polarization,” where citizens begin to view one another as enemies rather than legitimate political opponents. However, others framed the democratic risk through the problem of visibility. PT Switzerland (EU-04) described this problem more clearly, arguing that “nuanced perspectives get buried beneath clickbait and confirmation.” Together, these texts frame algorithmic personalization as a threat to civil dialogue where citizens are trapped in filter bubbles and encounter more confirming, emotional, or polarizing content.

Algorithmic systems were also connected to misinformation around high-stakes public issues such as elections and vaccine hesitancy. PT Switzerland (EU-04) argued that coordinated misinformation campaigns can weaponize algorithms and influence public understanding of issues. This was very visible in African texts, where algorithmic gatekeeping was framed as a threat to information sovereignty, media sustainability, and national democratic life. Premium Times (AF-04) reported that Nigerian press bodies warned that Nigeria risks surrendering control of its “democratic conversation, national cohesion, and information sovereignty” to unregulated foreign technology companies if decisive action is not taken. It further described the dominance of global digital platforms over Nigeria’s information ecosystem as a “strategic national threat, not merely an industry challenge,” thus expanding the discussion beyond platform design to connect issues of national accountability and democratic sovereignty.

Furthermore, the texts connected democratic threat to the economic weakening of journalism. Premium Times (AF-04) argued that press freedom cannot exist without economic viability, noting that news organizations unable to pay salaries, fund investigations, or retain skilled professionals are “in effect, unfree,” regardless of constitutional guarantees. Similar concern was echoed across borders as newsrooms grapple with sustaining local journalism and closing news deserts. According to Scroll (AS-03), “when the news organizations suffer, democracy suffers as well,” linking the decline of trusted reporters to less competitive political campaigns, less informed voters, lower voter turnout, and higher public costs in communities without strong local news. Medianama (AS-05) made a related argument, stating that Google and Facebook have monopolized the digital advertising market and taken over revenue that once supported the journalism ecosystem. It also argued that where local news outlets have closed, Google and Facebook have been unable to fill the vacuum and have instead populated it with misinformation and misleading commentary.

Taken together, these texts frame the threat to democracy

and civil dialogue through three connected problems. First, algorithms can intensify polarization by making extreme, emotional, or confirming content more visible. Second, algorithmic personalization can narrow public debate by limiting exposure to opposing or nuanced viewpoints. Third, platform power can weaken journalism's economic base, making it harder for newsrooms to perform their democratic role. In this theme, the algorithmic era is therefore framed as a threat to democratic accountability, independent journalism, and the public's access to reliable information.

Theme 4: Media Pushback and Adaptation Strategies

The final theme addresses how media organizations, journalists, and other actors respond to algorithmic pressure through strategies of adaptation, resistance, accountability, audience education, transparency, and platform negotiation. This theme answers the third research question: what strategies do the texts identify as ways news organizations across regions respond to, adapt to, or resist the pressures of the algorithmic era?

Across the texts, media pushback was framed in two main ways. First, while some emphasized adaptation, urging media organizations to understand platform logics and adjust their delivery to remain visible, others strongly opposed platform dependence, insisting that news organizations must reduce dependence on platforms, rebuild direct relationships with audiences, and defend journalism's public-interest role.

The first adaptation strategy urged modifying content for platform environments while still avoiding clickbait. Business Wire (NA-03) recommended creating "shorter summaries, visually engaging graphics, or even short videos that capture the essence of your story." It also encouraged publishers to craft headlines that "spark curiosity and invite clicks without veering into clickbait territory," use images and videos to capture attention, and identify when audiences are most active. This framing presents adaptation as a practical survival strategy, where news organizations learn how platforms work while trying to protect editorial quality. There is also emphasis on the need for journalists to remain present on digital platforms. The Tyee (NA-05) argued that journalists need to "flood the zone with accurate, reliable reporting" and do so in a way that resonates with audiences. Trained journalists must be present on social media, disseminate credible information, and correct misinformation. Abandoning these spaces gives room for less reliable voices to fill the gap. In addition to this, journalism must rebuild around qualities that algorithms and AI cannot easily replicate. Daily Maverick (AF-01) argued that newsrooms that thrive will be those producing "audience-centric, original, value-creating journalism that AI cannot replicate." It further emphasized the need to double down on what humans do best: cultivating sources, exercising judgment, holding power accountable, and producing journalism that helps people navigate life. Newsrooms that will survive are those that place emphasis on direct audience relationships.

Scroll (AS-03) argued that publishers do not necessarily need millions of followers to be financially sustainable; instead, they should build "small, engaged communities of followers." Similarly, FIPP (EU-02) framed the end of the platform era as a return to direct reader relationships, arguing that publishers must regain control over discovery, distribution, and monetization. This strategy reflects a broader resistance to platform dependency; rather than relying entirely on algorithmic reach, media organizations are encouraged to cultivate loyal audiences through newsletters, subscriptions, memberships, apps, community-building, and owned platforms.

However, some proposed more structural forms of pushback. For example, The New York Times (NA-01) called for a "pro-choice movement for algorithms," arguing that users should be able to decide what they read rather than passively accept platform-controlled feeds. It also highlighted demands for recommender algorithms to be treated as a "public good". This strategy shifts the response from newsroom adaptation to user agency and platform accountability. Others pointed toward public-interest algorithm design, calling for algorithms built for public good rather than solely around engagement, outrage, or commercial visibility. However, others were more direct, calling for publishers to stop depending on external technology companies to define the future of news. According to Tech Policy Press (EU-06), "no single company, no matter how big or powerful, gets to control the news right across our planet." FIPP (EU-02) made a similar argument about AI, warning that the news industry should not repeat past mistakes by relying too heavily on companies such as Google, Meta, or OpenAI. They argued that the media industry is capable of building "publisher-first AI" rather than "jumping into bed with OpenAI," thus positioning media survival as a matter of ownership, infrastructure, and control. Meanwhile, the rest framed media resistance through policy, regulation, and public-interest investment. For example, Premium Times (AF-04) called for Nigeria to adopt a homegrown legal response that would recognize journalism as a public-interest activity, correct bargaining power imbalances, ensure fair compensation for Nigerian news content, and preserve innovation and consumer choice. Daily Maverick (AF-03) similarly emphasized that technology should strengthen, not weaken, the relationship between people and reliable information. In summary, platform resistance is seen as a collective responsibility involving governments, technology companies, funders, journalists, and the public.

Taken together, media organizations are not passive victims of algorithmic power but active participants that have identified multiple strategies for survival and resistance. These strategies include adapting content to platform environments, strengthening human-centered journalism, building direct relationships with news audiences, designing public-interest algorithms, developing publisher-owned AI, and advocating for policy intervention.

Discussion

Using media framing theory, the purpose of this study was to analyze how algorithmic gatekeeping is framed across selected public-facing media texts from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America, and how texts from these regions approach the issue. Specifically, the study examined media texts from Nigeria, South Africa, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, India, and Denmark, alongside some texts with broader global or cross-national focus. Through qualitative content analysis of more than twenty public-facing media texts, this paper provides insight into dominant media framings of algorithmic gatekeeping across four regions of the world.

The findings show that algorithmic gatekeeping is framed as a major shift in journalistic power. Traditionally, gatekeeping was associated with editors, journalists, and news organizations. These actors decided what information entered public circulation, what stories were prioritized, and how issues were framed. Classic gatekeeping theory explains this process as the selection and filtering of news before it reaches the public (White, 1950). However, this gatekeeping function has moved beyond the newsroom and into platform infrastructures, users, and technology companies (Wallace, 2018; DeVito, 2017).

Regional Differences in Algorithmic Pressure Framing and Media Response

Although algorithmic gatekeeping appeared as a global concern across the sample, the framing differed across regions. The findings show that algorithmic power is not experienced or described in the same way everywhere. Instead, it is interpreted through local media systems, political conditions, economic pressures, levels of platform dependence, and regional histories of media power.

In the North American texts, algorithmic gatekeeping was framed mainly through social media platforms, political polarization, misinformation, and public discourse. The discussions focused mainly on how platforms shape what people see, how political content circulates, and how algorithmic systems may intensify ideological division.

However, African media framed algorithmic gatekeeping mainly as a problem of information sovereignty, media sustainability, and unequal platform power. It argues that foreign technology companies increasingly dominate advertising, visibility, and the infrastructure of public discourse. In Nigerian texts, platform dominance was seen as a strategic national threat, not merely as a media business problem. However, South African media called for policy support and investment that protect the media industry. Therefore, in African media contexts, algorithmic gatekeeping is tied closely to questions of democracy, economic dependence, and the survival of independent journalism.

Furthermore, Asian media, especially those focused on India, framed algorithmic gatekeeping through Google

Search, AI summaries, copyright, publisher revenue, local newsroom visibility, and the imbalance of power between Big Tech and publishers. These texts highlighted how search algorithms and AI-generated summaries affect website traffic, advertising revenue, and the ability of publishers to control the appropriation and use of their own work. They also connected algorithmic systems to misinformation regarding health and science topics, especially around vaccines, Covid-19, climate change, and public knowledge. In this regional framing, algorithmic power becomes both an economic and epistemic problem, dictating who gets paid, seen, and whose knowledge becomes visible.

On the other hand, the European media discussed algorithmic gatekeeping through regulation, transparency, publisher-first AI, platform-dependent infrastructure, and the need to reclaim control from dominant platforms. Some texts criticized the way algorithms shape newsroom decisions, including formats, hiring, headlines, and audience strategies. Others called for the development of publisher-first AI tools or direct relationships with audiences against sole dependence on Google, Meta, or OpenAI. In this sense, Europe was framed as a region where platform dominance is strongly contested through regulation, institutional response, and industry-level resistance.

However, these differences should not be generalized to represent a whole region, as the analyzed texts are not sufficient to make absolute conclusions. Notwithstanding, these patterns may indicate how each region approaches and understands a global problem. While North American media leaned more toward polarization, social media power, and public discourse, African texts showed more concern for sovereignty, democratic survival, and media sustainability. Asian media, on the other hand, focused on search dependence, publisher revenue, copyright, and local media visibility, while European texts debated platform regulation, accountability, publisher independence, and public-interest technology.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations. First, the analysis is based on selected public-facing media texts rather than a representative global sample. Because of this, the findings can not be generalized to all media organizations or all countries within Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America. While the texts provide important insight into how algorithmic gatekeeping is framed across selected regions, they do not capture the full complexity of each region.

Secondly, the sample includes different types of texts, including news reports, commentaries, explainers, industry articles, and policy-oriented pieces. These genres may frame algorithmic gatekeeping differently because they have different purposes and audiences. A policy commentary, for example, may emphasize regulation more than a news report, while an industry article may emphasize adaptation and survival. Future research

could separate these genres more clearly to examine whether different types of media texts frame algorithmic gatekeeping in different ways.

Thirdly, this study analyzes public-facing texts rather than interviewing journalists, editors, platform workers, or policymakers. This means the study captures how algorithmic gatekeeping is publicly discussed, but not necessarily how newsrooms internally experience or respond to algorithmic pressure. Future research could use interviews with journalists and editors to better understand how algorithmic systems shape newsroom routines, hiring, story selection, headline writing, SEO decisions, and audience strategies.

Future studies could also use larger samples and computational methods to compare algorithmic gatekeeping frames across more countries, languages, and platforms. Another useful direction would be to compare how legacy media, independent media, platform companies, and civil society organizations frame the same issue. This would provide a richer understanding of who defines algorithmic gatekeeping as a problem, who is blamed for it, and what solutions are proposed.

CONCLUSION

Across the texts, media organizations were presented as active participants challenging platform dominance over their industry through several strategies. While some encouraged adaptation through shorter summaries, stronger headlines, visual content, videos, and platform-native formats, others warned that adaptation should not mean surrendering journalism's ethical mission. This illustrates the tension between media adaptation and resistance to platform control. The future of journalism depends, to an extent, on how media organizations understand and navigate platforms without surrendering their power and values. To achieve this, newsrooms are encouraged to build direct relationships with audiences, create engaged communities, invest in original reporting, diversify revenue, repurpose content, and develop publisher-first AI systems.

In summary, this study shows that algorithmic gatekeeping is more than a technological change in journalism. It is also a struggle over visibility, ethics, power, revenue, public trust, and democracy. Across the sampled texts, algorithms are not just distribution systems but also infrastructures that influence what information becomes visible, profitable, credible, and influential in democratic life.

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