

Beyond Connectivity: Social Media, Cultural Consumption, and the Transformation of Social Norms in the Digital Age

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Abstract

The transformation of social life in the digital age is marked not only by increased connectivity, but also by fundamental changes in the way individuals understand, internalize, and negotiate social values and norms. Social media has evolved into a cultural ecosystem mediated by algorithms, which actively shape moral orientations and patterns of value consumption in everyday life. This study aims to analyze how social media practices, digital culture consumption, and algorithmic mediation simultaneously contribute to the transformation of social norms in contemporary society. This study uses a systematic literature review approach combined with critical thematic synthesis of Scopus publications from 2021 to 2025 and global digital research reports. The analysis identifies three main dimensions: (1) the reconfiguration of social values through globally oriented digital cultural consumption, (2) the normalization of new social behaviors through algorithmic mechanisms, and (3) the shift from collective conformity to individualized morality in the digital public sphere. Findings show that social media no longer functions merely as a medium of communication, but as a socio-technical infrastructure that produces and legitimizes new moral codes through visibility, repetition, and user participation. This study offers an analytical framework that integrates cultural consumption theory and algorithmic governance to understand the moral and normative consequences of digital media practices in the algorithmic era.

Keywords: social media practices, cultural consumption, social norm transformation, algorithmic governance, participatory culture, digital morality.

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1. Introduction

Social transformation in the digital age is not only about increased connectivity, but also about fundamental changes in how individuals understand, internalize, and express social values. Social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram now serve as arenas for social learning, replacing the role of traditional institutions in shaping the value orientations of adolescents and urban communities (Jungselius, 2024). Through visual and participatory content, adolescents gain cross-border cultural references that shape new habits that are global, open, and detached from conventional norms (Soh et al., 2024). This process of value internalization occurs simultaneously with the algorithmic logic that governs exposure, visibility, and social validation based on digital interactions (Taylor & Chen, 2024). These changes not only reflect cultural globalization but also mark the emergence of a new form of digital morality, where norms and values are no longer controlled by hierarchical social structures but are negotiated through algorithmic mechanisms and user participation. This phenomenon is evident in how digital cultural consumption functions as the primary mechanism for reconfiguring social values in an increasingly algorithmically connected society.

Previous studies have identified a relationship between social media and changes in social values, but most still emphasize aspects of communication or individual psychological impact, rather than cultural and normative dimensions. Butler's study (2024) shows that the consumption of global popular culture through social media encourages the normalization of modern lifestyles and individualistic values. Meanwhile, Wang et al. (2024) assert that algorithms are not neutral, but can determine exposure to certain values and behaviors, thereby shaping what is considered normal or desirable in the digital space. Recent research on cancel culture and digital activism by Van Bavel et al. (2024) reveals a shift in morality from a collective value system to a personal morality based on self-expression and authenticity. From existing studies, there is still a conceptual gap regarding how the three processes of cultural consumption, algorithmic mediation, and moral personalization interact in shaping new social norms. Therefore, this study will discuss an approach that integrates these three contexts to explain the transformation of social values holistically, across cultural layers, and empirically measurable.

This study aims to explain how social media functions as an algorithmic cultural ecosystem that not only facilitates communication but also produces new norms and moralities through digital cultural consumption. Specifically, this study aims to explain three main interrelated contexts. First, the reconfiguration of social values through globally oriented digital cultural consumption. Second, algorithmic mediation in normalizing new social

behaviors and shaping public perceptions. Third, the shift from collective moral uniformity to individual morality in the digital public sphere. By combining sociological, cultural, and digital media studies approaches, this study seeks to go beyond the conventional understanding of social media as a space for communication toward a new conception of social media as a mechanism for the production of digital values and morality. The conceptual novelty of this study lies in its theoretical formulation explaining how algorithmic logic and cultural consumption practices operate simultaneously in shaping new social norms, thereby presenting a perspective that is still rarely explored empirically in contemporary literature.

The basic assumption of this study is that social media acts as a cultural infrastructure that actively produces and legitimizes social meaning. Digital interactions are understood as performative practices that shape value structures through representation, repetition, and social recognition that occur continuously in online spaces. The transformation of social norms in the digital age is assumed to be caused by three main factors: first, the dissemination of global symbols and values through digital cultural consumption; second, algorithmic curation that regulates social visibility while determining moral legitimacy; and third, the individualization of morality that emphasizes authenticity and self-expression as the basis for identity formation. Conceptually, this study asserts that algorithms and digital culture cannot be viewed merely as external influences on human behavior, but rather as socio-technical actors that contribute to the creation of new moral structures. Therefore, this study provides a critical understanding that the transformation of social norms in the digital age is not merely an impact of increased connectivity, but rather the result of a convergence between participatory culture and algorithmic logic that collectively shape the morality and social identity of contemporary society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Practices

Social media practice is understood as a series of routine actions, technical tools, and cultural norms that are interrelated and shape the way people produce, consume, and disseminate meaning in the digital space (Fu & Cook, 2021). In line with this, Selkie & Moreno (2016), state that social media practice refers to various activities and interactions that occur on digital platforms that enable users to communicate, share information, and form social networks globally. This practice differs from conventional media, which is more one-way

in nature (Hogan & Melville, 2015). Activities on social media include the production and consumption of text, images, videos, and various other forms of digital expression, indicating that interactions are not only passive monitoring but also active engagement (O’Riordan et al., 2016). Furthermore, this practice plays a role in the formation of social identity, behavioral transformation, and individual cognitive development, making it an integral part of cultural dynamics and social life in the digital age (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015).

Studies on social media practices show that social media has a significant impact on shaping social values that influence various aspects of public and individual life. A number of studies highlight how social media has become an arena for value formation through communicative interactions that are critical, affirmative, and collective in nature (Al-Shyyab et al., 2025; Parker & Bozeman, 2018). In the context of education, social media has been shown to influence the formation of social values among adolescents through the dissemination of educational content that instills positive values and behaviors (Liu, 2025). In the context of culture, social media also shapes cultural awareness by transmitting socio-cultural traditions and norms. Social media contributes to the formation of collective consciousness and encourages positive social change (D’Ambrosi & Polci, 2017). Thus, the practice of using social media not only represents a change in the way individuals communicate, but also becomes an active social mechanism in shaping, negotiating, and transforming social values in the digital age.

2.2 Cultural Consumption

Cultural consumption is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various social, economic, and symbolic processes in modern life. Duche Pérez & Andía Gonzales (2019), reveal that cultural consumption is not only related to the use of goods and/or services but also to the appropriation of meanings attached to symbolic products. Symbolic value often dominates over use value and exchange value, as cultural products serve as a means of expressing meaning, status, and social identity (Na’amneh, 2021). Furthermore, cultural consumption is also closely related to cultural capital, where participation in certain cultural activities can open up opportunities for economic mobility, improve class position, and strengthen social hierarchy (Korsunova, 2019; Reeves & de Vries, 2019). In the digital age, cultural consumption patterns have undergone significant transformations, as seen in the use of digital platforms to expand access, accelerate the circulation of symbols, and enable broader

engagement, making it an integral part of contemporary social interactions (Barrio, 2025).

Cultural consumption is widely influenced by various social, economic, and technological factors that shape the way individuals and groups interact with cultural products. First, the value creation factor emphasizes that cultural consumption is not only related to economic function, but also to the symbolic value attached to a product. These values arise from social, aesthetic, and emotional meanings constructed through cultural interactions (Sriharan et al., 2019). Second, social and economic influence factors show that preferences and consumption patterns are often formed through social networks and symbolic capital, which contribute to increasing individuals' social status and economic opportunities (Katz-Gerro & Sullivan, 2010; Reeves & de Vries, 2019). Third, digital platform factors mark a major transformation in cultural consumption patterns, namely the use of social media such as Instagram and TikTok, which allow users not only to consume but also to create and mediate new cultural meanings (Barrio, 2025). Thus, cultural consumption is a dynamic process that continues to evolve alongside changes in social structures and developments in digital technology.

2.3 Social norm transformation

Social norm transformation refers to the process whereby established norms in society undergo significant change due to external influences or internal shifts (Cardinal & Loughmiller-Cardinal, 2024). Social norms are not static, but rather adaptive to the dynamics of the social environment and the ever-changing population of agents (Heidari et al., 2020). From a cognitive-social perspective, norms are understood as information processing systems that function to capture, store, and transmit shared values within social networks (Loughmiller-Cardinal & Cardinal, 2023). These collective values play a role in guiding the emergence, adaptation, and even elimination of certain norms as the social context changes. In addition, the transformation of norms can also occur through top-down regulation, where formal rules and new policies redefine what is considered appropriate behavior, eventually developing into new social norms (Gross et al., 2025). The study by Tarhan & Tutgun Ünal (2025), adds that in the digital era, social media accelerates the process of norm transformation by modifying individuals' perceptions of social norms through the increasing intensity, frequency, and nature of online engagement.

Previous studies on social norm transformation show that such changes occur in diverse social contexts and issues. This is evident in the following studies. First, in gender studies, norm transformation is evident through

changes in views on social role equality, women's rights, and practices such as child marriage. Various studies describe how social advocacy, education, legal policy, and digital activism play an important role in undermining the legitimacy of patriarchal norms that were previously considered normal and replacing them with values of gender equality and justice (Bicchieri et al., 2014; Chandramohan et al., 2023; Piedalue et al., 2020). Second, in the context of urban communities, changes in social norms are reflected in the way communities adapt to increasingly dense, digital, and individualistic urban lifestyles. This transformation includes shifts in values related to public space, lifestyle, and social interaction patterns, which are now largely mediated by technology and high mobility, signaling the formation of new norms in a more flexible and connectivity-based urban lifestyle (Asuah & Zumelzu, 2020; Chaudhry et al., 2022; Galdini & De Nardis, 2023). These studies show that the transformation of social norms has been examined from various perspectives and viewpoints.

3. Method

The unit of analysis in this study is scientific documents, specifically international journal articles and global research reports that discuss the relationship between digital culture consumption, social media practices, algorithmic mediation, and changes in social norms. Each document is treated as a single unit of data representing empirical findings or conceptual frameworks regarding the dynamics of values and morality in digital society. The analysis focuses on three main dimensions, namely the reconfiguration of social values through digital culture consumption, the role of algorithms in normalizing new social behaviors, and the shift in morality from a collective orientation towards individualization in the digital public sphere.

This study uses an interpretive qualitative approach with a systematic literature review design combined with critical thematic synthesis to analyze the transformation of social values, normalization of behavior, and shifts in morality in the digital space (Ahmmad et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because the research objective was not to test causal relationships or produce statistical generalizations, but rather to understand sociologically how values, norms, and morality are constructed and negotiated through social media practices and algorithmic logic. Thus, this study positions digital media as an active social arena that shapes meaning and value orientation, rather than merely as a medium of communication.

Data collection was conducted through systematic literature searches in the Scopus database, which was chosen for its academic credibility, international

coverage, and relevance to sociology and media studies. To strengthen the empirical context, this study also utilized research reports from credible independent research institutions as supporting data sources. The literature search was conducted between January and March 2025, limiting publications to the period 2021-2025 so that the findings analyzed represent the latest dynamics of digital society.

A systematic literature search was conducted using the Scopus database with a combination of keywords: social media practices, digital cultural consumption, algorithmic mediation, and social norm transformation, which were applied to the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles. The initial search yielded 286 publications, which after removing duplicates left 248 publications. Screening of titles and abstracts eliminated 197 publications because they were not relevant to the transformation of values, social norms, and digital morality, leaving 51 publications to proceed to the full-text reading stage. At this stage, 36 publications were excluded because they lacked an adequate empirical basis, were too technical or psychological-individual in their approach, or were incompatible with the sociological framework of the study. Thus, 15 sources were selected as the final corpus for analysis, consisting of 12 reputable international journal articles and 3 international media reports as contextual data. Each context of the analysis results (Results 4.1-4.3) is supported by four journal articles and one media report, ensuring a balance between academic depth and contemporary empirical relevance.

The selected data was then managed through the compilation of a synthesis matrix containing the research context, methodological approach, main findings, and sociological implications of each study. Data analysis was conducted in stages and iteratively using reflective thematic analysis. In the initial stage, open coding was performed to identify dominant themes related to digital culture consumption, algorithmic visibility, normalization of behavior, and moral negotiation. These themes were then grouped and synthesized into analytical narratives that were consistent with the research focus.

In the analysis process, quantitative findings from previous studies were not used to draw causal conclusions, but were interpreted sociologically as indicators of changes in social values and norms. Algorithms are positioned not as technical objects analyzed at the code level, but as socio-technological structures that shape visibility, legitimacy, and perceptions of normality in digital interactions. This approach allows for the integration of interaction dynamics at the micro level and changes in value structures at the macro level.

By combining systematic literature review and critical thematic synthesis, this methodology provides a coherent analytical framework for understanding how social media functions as a new social and moral space (Neumann & Rhodes, 2024). Through this approach, the research is able to explain the

processes of social value reconfiguration, algorithm-based behavior normalization, and moral shifts in a contextual, reflective, and consistent manner with the traditions of contemporary interpretive sociology.

4. Results

4.1 Reconfiguration of social values through digital cultural consumption

Digital media has reconstructed the way individuals, especially teenagers, understand and internalize social values in their daily lives. This transformation occurs through cultural consumption practices that are oriented towards visual and interactive content, where social media functions not only as a means of communication, but also as an arena for the formation of values and identity. In the digital space, algorithm-based interactions such as recommendation systems, likes, and comments act as mechanisms of social validation that reinforce new values based on popularity and openness. As a result, the socialization process, which was previously rooted in community norms, has shifted towards a more fluid global model, where self-expression and acceptance of diversity have become indicators of modernity and social progress. This context can be seen in table 1.

Table 1 comprehensively shows how digital media has become the main space for the transformation of social values among adolescents. First, visual platforms such as TikTok and YouTube now serve as the main source of social values learning, allowing adolescents to negotiate their identities and build new values that are more open to diversity. Second, social interactions based on likes and comments create a validation mechanism that accelerates the internalization of global norms and makes popularity a measure of social acceptance. Third, the intensity of social media use is positively correlated with changes in value orientation, where higher use encourages the normalization of modern lifestyles and stronger individual expression. Fourth, the practice of remix culture in digital cultural consumption expands value orientations from local to global, strengthening the spirit of openness and cross-cultural participation. Fifth, cross-cultural exposure in social media spaces accelerates the adoption of new norms related to gender and lifestyle, which ultimately shapes adolescents' social identities to be more fluid, globally oriented, and adaptive to the dynamics of modernity.

Table 1. Transformation of social values among adolescents through digital cultural consumption on social media

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Context	Empirical findings	Narrative	Source/DOI
Reconfiguration of Social Values through Digital Cultural Consumption	Visual platforms such as TikTok and YouTube are the main sources of social values learning for teenagers.	Teenagers use popular cultural content to negotiate new, more open identities and values.	https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2023/12/11/teens-social-media-and-technology-2023/
	Social interaction in digital media serves as a mirror of identity and accelerates the internalization of global values.	The like/comment mechanism validates new norms based on popularity.	https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05980-z
	The intensity of social media use correlates positively with changes in value orientation among adolescents.	Intensive use leads to the normalization of modern lifestyles and individual expression.	10.1007/s40894-024-00251-1
	The consumption of digital culture through the practice of remix culture shifts the orientation of values from local to global.	Digital participation-based activities reinforce the value of cultural openness.	https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12940
	The exposure of cross-cultural experiences on social media encourages the adoption of new norms related to gender and lifestyle.	Social identity is now more sought after and globally oriented.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105247

Digital culture consumption has become a central factor in the process of social value transformation among teenagers. Through active engagement on social media, teenagers not only interact and express themselves, but also unconsciously absorb and negotiate new values that are more open to social change. The digital space functions as a social arena where meaning, identity, and values are shaped through participation, visibility, and algorithms that regulate content flow. In this context, traditional collective values are being replaced by a new orientation that emphasizes individuality, creativity, and acceptance of diversity. This shift marks the birth of a new social configuration, in which digital media is not only a means of entertainment, but also an ideological instrument that shapes how the younger generation understands themselves and their position in global society.

4.2 Algorithmic mediation and the normalization of new social behaviors

Social media algorithms act as structural agents that shape patterns of interaction and user behavior in the digital space. Through recommendation systems and personalized feeds, algorithms not only regulate content visibility, but also influence perceptions of normality and social acceptance of certain behaviors. This mechanism makes the most frequently appearing trends on timelines appear as common and acceptable social norms, so that visibility becomes a new form of legitimacy in digital culture. As a result, the process of socializing values is no longer mediated by traditional institutions such as family or formal education, but rather by algorithmic logic that determines what is considered relevant, popular, and worthy of imitation. In this context, both users and content creators actively adjust their behavior and expressions to align with algorithmic mechanisms, which in turn accelerates the normalization of new forms of social interaction born from digital dynamics. This context can be seen in the table 2.

Table 2. Algorithmic mediation and normalization of new social behavior in the digital space

Context	Empirical findings	Narrative	Source/DOI
Algorithmic Mediation and the Normalization of New Social Behaviors.	Social media algorithms reinforce popular behavioral trends through recommendation systems.	Content with high engagement levels is elevated as the new social norm.	10.1073/pnas.2025334119
	Personalized feeds create echo chambers of values and behaviors.	Users are exposed to values that reinforce existing views.	10.1177/17456916231185057
	Algorithmic visibility determines the perception of the appropriateness of online behavior.	What frequently appears on the timeline is considered the general norm.	(Narayanan, 2023) https://knightcolumnbia.org/content/understanding-social-media-recommendation-algorithms
	Exposure regulated by feed algorithms (frequency and repetition of content) influences changes in attitudes and social acceptance of the behavior being presented.	Repeated exposure to content optimized by feed algorithms increases perceptions of normality because visibility acts as a signal of legitimacy; what frequently appears on the timeline tends to be perceived as an acceptable norm.	DOI:10.1126/science.abp9364
	Content creators are changing their creative strategies to adapt to the logic of algorithmic recommendations.	This process normalizes new digital behaviors.	https://doi.org/10.2323/2.24020202

Social media algorithms play an active role in shaping and normalizing new social behaviors in the digital space. First, recommendation systems have been shown to reinforce popular behavioral trends by making highly interactive

content the new social standard that is widely imitated. Second, personalized feeds create echo chambers of values and behaviors, where users are repeatedly exposed to views that reinforce their existing beliefs. Third, algorithmic visibility has been shown to determine perceptions of the appropriateness of online behavior, as what frequently appears on timelines is considered the general norm. Fourth, exposure regulated by feed algorithms through content frequency and repetition influences changes in user attitudes, with repeated exposure increasing perceptions of legitimacy toward the behavior displayed. Fifth, content creators strategically tailor the style and theme of their work to fit the logic of algorithmic recommendations, and this adaptation process contributes directly to the formation of new social norms in the digital space.

Social media algorithms have structural power in shaping the dynamics of social behavior in the digital space. Through content selection and recommendation mechanisms, algorithms subtly determine what is considered relevant, popular, and ultimately acceptable to imitate. This process not only creates a homogeneous environment for interaction, but also reshapes the way individuals understand social norms through repeated exposure to certain values and behaviors. As a result, the boundary between representation and social reality becomes blurred because digital visibility functions as a new marker of social legitimacy. In an ecosystem controlled by the logic of visibility, users and content creators alike participate in the process of adjusting to algorithmic structures that ultimately normalize new behaviors and communication practices in digital life.

4.3 From collective conformity to individualized morality in the digital public sphere

The context of collective conformity towards individual morality in the digital public sphere illustrates a fundamental shift in the way society understands and enforces morality in the digital age. The online public sphere now functions as a new moral arena where norms and values are no longer determined by traditional social authorities, but are negotiated through the collective interactions, expressions, and responses of users. Phenomena such as cancel culture show that digital morality is dynamic, enforced through symbolic mechanisms such as online boycotts or social exclusion, but also opens up space for the emergence of plural and relative morality. In this context, individual authenticity and self-expression become the center of moral legitimacy, replacing the uniformity of values that was once based on community control. Digital activism and hashtag-based movements show that solidarity is now built through shared personal values that are openly expressed on social media,

making modern morality increasingly fragmented, individualistic, and contextual, yet still possessing strong regulatory power in the digital public sphere. This context can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. The shift in morality from collectivity to individualization in the digital space

Context	Empirical findings	Narrative	Source/DOI
From Collective Conformity to Individualized Morality in the Digital Publis Sphere.	The phenomenon of cancel culture marks a moral shift from physical communities to digital spaces.	Moral norms are enforced through symbolic online actions.	https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1181872
	Public perception of cancel culture is divided between morality and censorship.	Demonstrating pluralistic morality in the digital space.	https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/05/19/americans-and-cancel-culture-where-some-see-calls-for-accountability-others-see-censorship-punishment/
	Authenticity on social media correlates with personal well-being and morality.	Today's digital morality is based on self-expression and consistency of personal values.	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.108056
	Digital activism through hashtag movements shapes new collective moral norms.	Digital solidarity replaces traditional social control.	https://doi.org/10.61194/ijcs.v2i4.681
	The effect of social media on adolescent values is individual and contextual.	Morality is currently negotiated at the personal level, not the collective level.	https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.14085

Findings from five data sets in the context of collective conformity towards individual morality in the digital public sphere indicate a fundamental change in the moral structure of digital society. First, the phenomenon of cancel culture shows a shift in morality from physical communities to digital spaces, where norms are enforced through symbolic online actions such as public ostracism or boycotts. Second, public perceptions of cancel culture reveal sharp differences between those who see it as a form of moral accountability and those who view it as social censorship, signaling the emergence of pluralistic morality in digital spaces. Third, the link between authenticity on social media and individual well-being shows that modern morality is now based on self-expression and consistency of personal values, rather than on collective uniformity of values. Fourth, hashtag movement-based digital activities serve as a means of forming new moral norms, where virtual solidarity replaces the role

of traditional social control in upholding shared values. Fifth, the impact of social media on youth values shows that morality today is individual and contextual, with the process of value negotiation occurring at the personal level rather than the community level. All of this data confirms that the digital space has become the main arena for the reconstruction of morality, from collective obedience to individual moral autonomy.

The transformation of morality in the digital age shows a fundamental shift from a collective value system to a more individualistic form of morality. The digital public sphere has become a new arena where morality is no longer enforced through traditional social institutions, but through symbolic interactions such as online support, criticism, and boycotts. In this context, social media functions as a space for negotiating values, allowing individuals to openly negotiate and display their moral identities. Morality is no longer measured based on conformity to dominant social norms, but on the authenticity and consistency of personal values displayed through digital expression. This phenomenon also shows how virtual solidarity and digital movements are replacing the social control functions previously carried out by physical communities. As a result, moral values are becoming increasingly fluid and contextual, depending on the ever-changing dynamics of digital interaction and the extent to which individuals are able to construct and maintain their moral image in front of a wide online audience.

5. Discussion

This research finding shows that digital culture consumption plays a central role in the reconfiguration of social value systems, particularly among teenagers and urban communities. Culture consumption through social media is no longer passive, but functions as a cross-border social learning mechanism that allows individuals to negotiate meaning, identity, and moral orientation in a global context (Yao, 2025). The shift from community-based value references to a more fluid and participatory cultural horizon confirms that social media now operates as cultural infrastructure, not merely as a communication channel (Corchia & Borghini, 2025). Within the framework of cultural globalization and networked individualism (Zhao & Wang, 2023), the practice of digital cultural consumption can be understood as a new form of socialization that shifts the role of traditional institutions in value formation toward a digital space based on visibility and social performativity.

Furthermore, this study confirms that the internalization of new values in the digital space is highly dependent on the algorithmic logic that governs visibility, relevance, and user engagement. Algorithms do not function neutrally,

but rather act as socio-technical actors that actively frame the boundaries of social normality (Carter et al., 2025). Values and behaviors that are frequently displayed in digital spaces, recommended, and receive high responses tend to be perceived as normal and worthy of imitation (Moji et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the mediatization perspective that views digital technology as a structural force that shapes social meaning, while also showing that the normalization of modern lifestyles, individual expression, and openness to difference are the result of the reproduction of values mediated by algorithmic systems.

This study also shows that algorithms operate as normative mediation mechanisms that regulate social behavior through the logic of visibility. In this context, digital visibility functions as a new form of symbolic capital, where what is visible in the digital space gains social legitimacy (Saxton & Guo, 2020). Users and content creators actively adjust their expressions and self-representation strategies to align with algorithmic preferences, thereby contributing to the reproduction and normalization of new norms (Liang et al., 2025). This phenomenon marks the increasingly blurred boundaries between human agency and technological structures, and indicates the emergence of a new form of algorithm-based cultural governance, where the direction of social value change is determined by the logic of digital systems.

However, algorithmic dynamics also produce ambivalent social consequences. On the one hand, algorithms expand exposure to global values and increase plurality of expression (Huang, 2024). On the other hand, personalization systems have the potential to create echo chambers that reinforce value homogeneity within certain groups (Hartmann et al., 2025). This paradox shows that social media simultaneously promotes openness and moral segregation (Rodillo, 2024). Thus, algorithms not only mediate social interactions, but also group individuals based on value and moral affinities, forming patterns of moral clustering that influence the structure of social relations in the digital space.

In addition, the findings of this study reveal a fundamental shift from collective morality to individualized morality based on authenticity. The digital public sphere functions as a new moral arena, where values and norms are no longer enforced by formal social authorities, but are negotiated through symbolic interactions, digital affections, and public responses (Baden et al., 2025). Phenomena such as cancel culture and hashtag-based activism show that moral sanctions and solidarity are now built through decentralized mechanisms that are performative and contextual in nature (Đurđević et al., 2025). In these conditions, moral legitimacy is increasingly determined by the consistency of self-expression and conformity with personal values that are displayed publicly.

Theoretically, this study asserts that the transformation of social norms in the digital age cannot be understood solely as the result of increased connectivity, but rather as the outcome of the convergence between digital cultural consumption, algorithmic mediation, and the individualization of morality. Social media emerges as an algorithmic cultural infrastructure that produces, disseminates, and normalizes values through everyday digital practices (Sánchez-vera, 2025). Thus, this study expands the field of digital sociology by showing that algorithms and digital culture are not merely external contexts for social action, but are integral to the formation of contemporary moral structures and social identities. These findings open up space for further research that empirically examines human-algorithm interactions in the formation of digital morality in various social and cultural contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study confirms that the transformation of social norms in the digital age cannot be understood solely as a result of increased connectivity, but rather as the result of simultaneous interactions between digital cultural consumption, algorithmic mediation, and moral individualization. Social media operates as an algorithmic cultural ecosystem that actively produces, disseminates, and normalizes values through everyday digital practices. Findings indicate that digital cultural consumption drives a shift in value orientation from collective conformity toward more open individual expression, while algorithms function as structural agents that regulate visibility and provide moral legitimacy. In this context, the digital public sphere has become the primary arena for negotiating social meaning, where authenticity, performativity, and symbolic recognition increasingly replace traditional community-based moral standards.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of digital sociology and mediatization theory by positioning social media as algorithmic cultural infrastructure, rather than merely a neutral medium of communication. By integrating cultural consumption theory and algorithmic governance logic, this study offers an analytical framework that explains how norms and morality are formed through continuous interaction between human agency and socio-technological systems. These findings reinforce the view that algorithms are socio-technical actors with normative power, capable of shaping value hierarchies, defining the boundaries of normality, and influencing the moral orientation of society in the digital space.

In practical terms, the results of this study emphasize the importance of a critical approach to digital ecosystem management. Efforts to encourage digital participation and visibility must be accompanied by a commitment to

algorithmic transparency, platform ethics, and the promotion of diversity of values. Strengthening digital literacy is key to enabling users to engage reflectively with algorithmically curated content and not accept the normalization of values uncritically. Further research needs to develop cross-cultural and comparative empirical studies to examine how algorithmic cultural infrastructure works in different social contexts. An interdisciplinary approach combining sociology, media studies, and digital ethics will further deepen our understanding of the dynamics of changing norms and morality in an increasingly complex and adaptive digital society.

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