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Digital technologies and media in environmental protests and the climate change movement

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Abstract. The relevance of the topic is determined by the fact that digital media have radically transformed environmental activism, turning it into a global communication process with its own narratives and symbols. The aim of the study was to analyse how different digital platforms alter the strategies, organisational models, and political influence of climate movements in various sociocultural contexts. The results of a quantitative analysis of over 270 tweets, presented in previous studies, as well as available discourse analyses of visual content on Instagram, supplemented by the author's comparative review of cases in Germany, Australia, and Kenya, were used, allowing for the identification of differences in the functioning of digital campaigns. The results showed that X serves the function of rapid coordination and mass dissemination of slogans, Instagram has become a tool for visual personalisation and emotional engagement, strengthening authentic connections between activists and the audience, YouTube provided a capacity for in – depth communication through documentary and educational materials, while Facebook was a key channel for local mobilisation, particularly in countries with limited access to traditional media. Comparative analysis demonstrated that a networked approach with systemic policy influence dominates in Germany, an emotional – visual strategy prevails in Australia, while in Kenya, digital platforms play a compensatory role, overcoming the weakness of institutional communication channels. The study revealed the influence of new formats – short videos and live streams, which amplify the effect of presence and transform local protests into global events. It was established that the combination of the ritualised protest forms of Fridays for Future and the performative actions of Extinction Rebellion created a synergy that compelled political institutions to respond to climate demands. At the same time, risks were identified: dependence on commercial platforms, the spread of misinformation by climate sceptics, and the uneven engagement of audiences in different countries. The conclusions emphasised that digital media have become not merely a communication tool but a structure – forming element of protest movements, shaping new frameworks of climate discourse. Overcoming the dichotomy of online and offline spaces proved effective for climate activism. The research results can be used by activists of environmental movements in their daily work on social networks for planning effective campaigns, creating content, and countering manipulations

Keywords: coordination; slogan; misinformation; emotional engagement; effect of presence

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, climate activism has acquired a global scale, transforming traditional forms of protest into complex networked movements that actively utilise digital technologies. Social media, particularly Instagram, X, YouTube, and other platforms, have become not only channels of communication but also spaces of symbolic production, where new narratives, identities, and images of activism are formed. At the same time, climate protests are increasingly accompanied by ambivalence: digital tools enable the mobilisation of millions, yet simultaneously contribute to the celebrityisation of politics and the simplification of

discourse. This creates a contradictory field in which climate movements strive to assert justice and systemic change but face the challenges of mediatisation, algorithmisation, and the capitalist logic of platforms. Studying how social media shape climate discourse is important not only for understanding activist strategy but also for assessing the potential of the digital environment in addressing the global ecological crisis.

M.C. Stoddart *et al.* (2025) analysed over two thousand publications on Instagram during COP26 (Conference of the Parties) and showed that this platform serves as a space

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for expressing critical counter – discourses, particularly regarding climate justice and the rights of indigenous peoples. The researchers pointed out that the visual nature of Instagram simultaneously contributes to the celebrityisation of climate policy, structuring the debate around images of “heroes” and “villains” among politicians and celebrities. This highlighted the dual role of Instagram as both a mobilisation tool and an arena for simplifying political content. A. Bussoletti *et al.* (2025) studied the media ecology of the Italian branch of Fridays for Future and identified fundamental contradictions of contemporary climate activism. They noted that the use of digital platforms, built on capitalist logic, to combat the climate crisis exacerbates environmental risks; however, activists attempted to resolve this dilemma by forming a new understanding of the digital footprint. They showed that by combining mainstream and alternative platforms, movements – built hybrid strategies while maintaining a radical anti – capitalist position. J. Goodman & T. Morton (2023) investigated the development of climate movements from the mid – 2000s and identified three core strategies: “transition”, “transformation”, and “emergency”. Their study, using examples from Germany, India, and Australia, showed that in different contexts, there is potential for convergence of themes, fostering cross – sectoral mobilisation. The authors emphasised that such mobilisation is necessary for effective climate policy and the enhancement of societal agency.

M. Jacqmarcq (2021) posited that although digital technologies have provided environmental movements with new tools for communication and international coordination, they have not caused radical transformation. The researcher emphasised that the neoliberal economic framework within which these technologies operate contradicted the goals of the movement, as it perpetuates overproduction and overconsumption, undermining the possibility of achieving significant change without overcoming this contradiction. H.K. Haastrup & P.D. Marshall (2024) analysed macro – and micro – influencers in the climate discourse on Instagram and identified a paradigmatic shift in visual communication. They emphasised that, alongside traditional celebrity advocacy, the authentic demonstration of sustainable practices by activists and entrepreneurs was gaining significance. Such communication created new role models and fostered audience engagement in real actions. M. Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & N. Hall (2024) showed that digital technologies have become a foundational tool for NGOs (Non – Governmental Organisations), such as Fridays for Future or 350.org. They found that social networks and “big data” are transforming organisational forms and tactics, yet simultaneously generating risks in defining objectives and limiting activists’ capabilities due to technological frameworks.

J.E. Hopke & L. Paris (2021) studied the role of social media in environmental activism and argued that they facilitate the rapid diffusion of tactics and create conditions for counter – hegemonic resistance. The authors showed that youth and indigenous communities use social

networks to advance demands for environmental justice and link local protests with global movements, such as climate strikes. E. Burch (2021) explored how Pacific Islanders used social media to combat the climate crisis and for counter – hegemonic resistance. The author indicated that platforms helped them challenge the bias of traditional media and highlight their own experience of existential threat from climate change, creating alternative narratives. Despite a rich body of research, it remains insufficiently clear how visual platforms simultaneously strengthen climate activism and reduce its content through mediatisation and celebrityisation. The question of how activists combine different media strategies in response to the structural constraints of digital technologies and how this affects the political effectiveness of movements requires further analysis.

The aim of the study was to elucidate the role of social media in transforming climate activism as a space of simultaneous mobilisation and celebrityisation of politics. The objectives of the study encompassed an analysis of the discursive practices of climate activism in social networks; identification of the contradictions between the mobilisational potential of digital platforms and their structural constraints; and an assessment of the impact of these media strategies on the legitimacy and political efficacy of climate movements.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research methodology was based on an interdisciplinary analysis of digital platforms and practices of environmental activism across three distinct national contexts – Germany, Australia, and Kenya. The selection of these specific case studies was justified by the differences in their socio – cultural conditions, political institutions, and media infrastructure, which allowed for the application of a comparative approach to identify both common and specific characteristics of digital mobilisation. The comparison was conducted according to the following criteria: digital platforms used, content format and type, nature of narratives, mobilisation tactics, level of media visualisation, intensity of information activity, as well as the socio – political outcomes arising in response to the digital campaigns. Additional parameters for comparison included the scale of audience reach, degree of message personalisation, role of the emotional component, dependence on traditional media, and level of institutional support.

The research was grounded in case studies, which involved reconstructing digital communication practices in each country through content analysis on X (2025), YouTube (2025), Instagram (2025), Facebook (2025), as well as on blogs and in online news. The collection of empirical material included the analysis of posts, video messages, microblogs, informational publications, thematic comments, and activist messages, which enabled the reconstruction of the structure and dynamics of digital activity. Particular attention was paid to how different types of platforms shape different levels of communicative interaction: from short, impulse – driven reactions to prolonged, structured discussion.

The German case is represented by the activity of the climate movement, distinguished by its systematic use of global social networks and a high regularity of digital presence. Within this case, empirical studies were analysed that illuminate the movement's communicative strategies on X, its engagement of youth, publication tempo, methods of forming information waves, and mechanisms for mobilising supporters. The comparison was conducted according to parameters of digital traffic intensity, dominant frames, types of multimedia content, and the capacity to generate political influence.

The Australian case focused on the work of the Climate Council (2025) and Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action (2025). Here, the specificities of personalised narratives related to the consequences of the 2019-2020 bushfires were considered, as well as the role of blogs, thematic websites, and social networks in constructing emotionally charged messages. The analysis was performed by juxtaposing methods of creating narratives about vulnerability and responsibility, levels of video content usage, and information verification mechanisms. The Kenyan case was based on sources reflecting the specifics of digital activity within a fragmented media environment. Materials from *The Elephant*, including analytics on land management and climate justice (Magedwa, 2024), allowed for tracing the logic of forming civic mobility in countries where traditional media have limited influence. A publication in the *Washington Post* (Richburg, 2024) served as an important source for assessing youth engagement in environmental discourse through social networks. The comparison in this case centred on the role of digital technologies as a compensatory tool under conditions of low institutional media support, as well as on the methods of information dissemination and circulation within network communities. The inclusion of these cases allowed for tracing how digital and media practices can influence the formation of political agendas at the level of parliamentary elections (Germany) or parliamentary hearings on the climate emergency (the United Kingdom).

An additional level of analysis included global movements, among which Extinction Rebellion (n.d.) was engaged as a model of performative – confrontational mobilisation. Comparing global and national cases enabled the identification of how digital practices influence the formation of political agendas, including parliamentary procedures and public debates. Thus, the methodological foundation of the research combines case studies, comparative analysis, and the reconstruction of communication practices of environmental movements based on digital activity statistics, empirical examples, analytical reports, and scholarly works. This methodology avoids reductionism and ensures a multidimensional approach to studying the phenomenon of digital environmental protests.

RESULTS

Digital media as a mobilisation tool in environmental protests

Digital technologies and media, primarily social networks, blogs, and video platforms, play a significant role

in environmental protests and the climate movement of the 21st century, shaping a new model of mobilisation and communication. Their effectiveness is determined not only by technical capabilities but also by the ability to transform environmental issues into visually and emotionally expressive content that captures the attention of a broad audience and stimulates participation.

X (2025) serves as a platform for the rapid dissemination of slogans, statistics, and calls to action. Thanks to the short message format and hashtag mechanism, it creates an effect of “digital resonance”, where local protests gain global coverage. In the case of the Fridays for Future (n.d.), it was X that allowed for the swift spread of information about upcoming actions and the synchronisation of activist activities across different countries. The high level of slogan repetition in tweets ensures their recognisability and entrenchment in the information space, thereby strengthening the movement's symbolic capital. YouTube (2025), in turn, facilitates the visualisation of climate problems and protest activity. Video content enables the creation of not only documentary evidence of actions but also educational and motivational clips that explain complex environmental processes in an accessible form. For activists, this serves as a means of forming a long – term communication strategy, as videos remain available in open access, forming an archive of the digital memory of protests. The example of the Extinction Rebellion (n.d.) demonstrates that disseminating videos of street blockades or performative actions has a dual function: on one hand, mobilisational, and on the other, reputational, as such materials are capable of exerting pressure on political elites through public resonance.

Instagram (2025) differs from other platforms in its emphasis on visual narratives, where images, infographics, and short videos play the main role. Environmental activists utilise Instagram to create an emotional effect through photographs of the consequences of climate change or symbolic actions of protesters. In countries with a developed visual culture, such as Australia, Instagram has become the primary platform for personalised campaigns where activists position themselves as “witnesses to the climate crisis” (Haastrup, 2022). This fosters a sense of personal involvement and trust from the audience, which enhances the effectiveness of mobilisational appeals. Scholarly analysis shows that content with high emotional load in visual media contributes not only to information dissemination but also to active participation in protests (Lu & Peng, 2024). Facebook (2025) retains significance as a tool for organisation and coordination, particularly in regions where it remains the leading social network. Its event functionality allows for the creation of announcements, groups, and communities that unite activists at the local level. In Kenya, it was Facebook and online news that served as mobilisation tools around issues of water scarcity and the consequences of climate change for agricultural regions (Akinyi *et al.*, 2023). Here, digital communication fulfils the role of a compensatory mechanism in situations where access to traditional media is limited or state – controlled.

Blogs by environmental activists, although less immediate than social networks, form a deeper discourse, providing the opportunity to present reasoned explanations of complex aspects of climate processes, provide references to scientific research, and engage experts. This creates a kind of bridge between the scientific community and the mass movement. In combination with short – content platforms, blogs perform analytical and educational functions, which helps maintain a balance between the emotional and rational in climate communication. The synergy of different digital platforms forms a multi – level mobilisation strategy. X creates an effect of instantaneous spread, Instagram appeals to emotions and visual symbols, YouTube provides depth and clarity, Facebook organises local communities, and blogs consolidate the analytical dimension of the discourse. Such multi – channel communication enhances the impact of environmental movements, as it allows for reaching diverse audiences – from youth, who perceive information in short video format, to experts and politicians seeking substantiated materials. In this context, digital media not only serve as a tool for engaging the public but also transform the very concept of protest, turning it into a continuous process of digital communication. Protest is no longer confined to the temporal framework of the street but continues in the digital space, where symbols, narratives, and discursive frames of climate activism are formed (Gaupp & Eker, 2024). In the study of environmental protests, comparative analysis of different countries gains importance, as the digital tools of activism exhibit variations depending on cultural, social, and political contexts. Although the general goal of most climate movements is to draw attention to the climate crisis and mobilise the public, the ways in which media resources are utilised demonstrate specificities that determine both the scale of protests and the degree of influence on state policy.

In Germany, Fridays for Future (n.d.) is studied as one of the most successful models of digital climate activism. For instance, in the research by A. Fernández-Zubietta *et al.* (2023), 111,844 unique tweets and retweets were collected under the hashtags “#climateStrike” and “#FridaysForFuture” to analyse the campaign for the Global Day of Climate Action on 25 September 2020. This indicates a significant digital volume of participation on X during the pandemic period. The article by H. Meyer *et al.* (2023) analyses the discourse surrounding German climate movements, particularly through X debates on Fridays for Future. This approach demonstrates that digital networks in Germany are becoming a space for both mobilisation and internal movement debates and conflicts. In Germany, the Fridays for Future movement demonstrates a well – documented pattern of digital platform use. An analysis of

the German segment of X (the period from June 2019 to May 2020) showed that 272,443 tweets and retweets were published with the #FridaysForFuture hashtag, of which 46,881 were original tweets and 225,562 were retweets. This volume of interactions is most pronounced during major protest actions – for example, on 20 September 2019, there were 13,934 tweets and 72,111 retweets specifically in the German – language segment of X. Simultaneously, this date coincided with a nationwide strike where, according to Clean Energy Wire estimates, protesters took to the streets in over 500 German cities – the total number of participants amounted to approximately 1.4 million people (Haßler *et al.*, 2023).

Australian examples indicate a different style of communication and mobilisation. The Climate Council organisation publishes transparent stories of people affected by the “Black Summer” (the 2019-2020 bushfires) on blogs and its website, particularly through narratives (Survivor Stories) from Bushfire Survivors for Climate Action (2025), which show concrete consequences – loss of property, changes in the duration of the bushfire season, start dates of the fire season, changes in the ecological resilience of regions. Through this organisation, public campaigns, appeals to government institutions, and media use are also organised: videos, social media posts with personal stories, calls for policy changes, participation in federal elections. Due to these activities, the environmental discourse in Australia is often shaped through emotionally and personally charged narratives. Furthermore, the Climate Council (2025) works extensively with blogs and media publications, disseminating explanations of climate phenomena in a style accessible to a broad audience – this approach is sometimes termed “science – popularising communication” within environmental activism.

In Kenya, digital media is one of the important channels of communication and activism in conditions of constraints on traditional media. The research by E. Mendenhall *et al.* (2025) analyses how digital activism in Kenya – a “shift from the digital centre to the periphery” – encourages local communities to use online networks for environmental mobilisation. Reports by The Elephant examine Kenya’s climate policy, particularly issues of land management and environmental justice raised through online analyses and publications (Magedwa, 2024). In the media space, attention to Kenyan youth as a new generation of activists is growing – for example, an article in the Washington Post describes how African online activists engage in the political narrative via social networks, highlighting corruption or climate challenges (Richburg, 2024). A comparison of digital media use is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of the utilisation of digital media in environmental protests in Germany, Australia, and Kenya

Country	Primary tools	Forms of activism	Features of utilisation	Outcomes and effects
Germany	X, YouTube	Mass rallies, global campaigns (Fridays for Future)	X – rapid dissemination of slogans, coordination of actions; YouTube – visualisation of protests, speeches by leaders	Globalisation of the movement, pressure on political elites, formation of the protest’s symbolic capital

Table 1. Continued

Country	Primary tools	Forms of activism	Features of utilisation	Outcomes and effects
Australia	Blogs, Instagram, Facebook	Personalised campaigns, visual actions, local rallies	Blogs – in – depth analysis and personal experience; Instagram – emotional visualisation; Facebook – community coordination	Strengthening activists' individual identity, increased emotional engagement, formation of long – term discourses
Kenya	Online news, Facebook, local social network campaigns	Regional initiatives, mobilisation of local communities	Online news – source of information; Social networks – tool for local coordination, overcoming the limitations of traditional media	Increased visibility of climate issues in the regions, strengthening of local mutual aid networks, compensation for the weakness of institutional media

Source: compiled by the author based on X. Zhang (2024), X (2025), YouTube (2025), Instagram (2025), Facebook (2025), E. Mendenhall *et al.* (2025)

The analysis of the presented case studies indicates that the choice of digital tools for environmental activism is determined both by the level of media infrastructure development and by the socio – cultural expectations of the audience. In Germany, effectiveness is ensured by the combination of global platforms capable of creating international resonance and increasing pressure on governments. In Australia, a significant factor is the cultural orientation towards visuality and personalisation, which transforms activism into a form of individual stories with a collective effect. In Kenya, digital technologies gain significance as a tool for survival under structural constraints, creating an opportunity for community activation even where support from institutional media is absent. This comparative analysis shows that while digital platforms have a universal character, their effectiveness depends on their ability to adapt to the specifics of a particular social context, and therefore, environmental movements can be viewed as globally connected but locally differentiated phenomena.

New media formats based on short, dynamic, and visually dense content have significantly transformed the communication strategies of environmental activism and have become a factor in its popularisation among broad social groups. Whereas traditional texts or static messages were oriented towards rational perception and the gradual formation of a reasoned position, short videos, streams, and visual narratives appeal to emotional engagement, create a sense of presence, and generate rapid and mass resonance. These formats not only increase the visibility of climate problems but also transform environmental protest into a constantly updated media event.

One of the roles is played by short videos, the dissemination of which is actively occurring on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. Their effectiveness is linked to the combination of two characteristics: brevity and high emotional impact. For example, footage of bushfires in Australia, filmed by activists in a 15-30 second format, spread with hashtags like #ClimateCrisis and became viral (Leimbach & Palmer, 2022). From a scientific perspective, this means that visual evidence of catastrophic events, through their compactness and repeatability, creates persistent symbols in the collective consciousness that transcend local contexts and shape the global climate

discourse. In this case, the short video acts not merely as informational material but as a kind of “memory frame” that cements the perception of the urgency of the problem.

Live streams (streams) create a different dimension of communication, as they provide the opportunity to join a protest in real time. In the scientific literature, this effect is described as the phenomenon of “digital presence”, where even those not physically participating in an action can feel a sense of involvement and collective identity. An example is the numerous streams of Extinction Rebellion actions in London, where the blocking of streets was broadcast online and attracted tens of thousands of viewers in various countries (Kountouris & Williams, 2023). Analysis of these cases confirms that streaming technologies have a dual effect: on the one hand, they ensure the transparency of the protest and counteract manipulation by traditional media, and on the other – they create a new type of activism that transcends physical localisation and transforms into a global event in virtual space. Visual narratives, which combine photos, graphics, infographics, and multimedia stories, allow for the construction of longer and more structured forms of communication. For instance, environmental organisations in Germany developed infographic materials explaining how a 1.5°C rise in average temperature would affect agriculture or marine ecosystems. In this case, visual narratives perform a cognitive function: they not only attract attention but also facilitate the transformation of complex scientific data into a comprehensible and convincing message. Research in communication sciences shows that visual materials increase the level of memorability and encourage long – term attitude change, which textual information does not always achieve. The analytical conclusion is that new media formats not only contribute to the dissemination of information about the climate crisis but also transform the very nature of activism. Whereas traditional protests were predominantly localised events with a limited audience, thanks to short videos and streams, they immediately acquire a global dimension. This changes the strategies of environmental movements: from planning physical actions, they transition to the parallel organisation of digital space, where the protest exists as a media event. As a result, new media formats become not just a tool but a structure –

forming element of contemporary climate activism, defining its scale, dynamics, and long – term consequences.

Global campaigns and the transformation of climate discourse under the influence of digital technologies

International initiatives like Fridays for Future (n.d.) and Extinction Rebellion (n.d.) have become phenomena in the global climate movement, as they have demonstrated how digital media can not only disseminate information about environmental problems but also transform them into a political and cultural agenda. Their mobilisational potential is explained by the combination of three factors: the use of new communication formats, the integration of local and global initiatives into a single network, and the ability to generate symbols of a universal character. Media coverage of these movements extends beyond the protest events themselves and includes broad discussion in society, the academic environment, and political institutions.

Fridays for Future, initiated by Greta Thunberg in 2018, grew from a local protest outside the Swedish parliament building into a global movement uniting millions of young people. At the core of its media strategy lies the systematic use of social networks, particularly X and YouTube, where messages from Thunberg and mass actions by school youth acquired a viral character. One element was the formation of the recognisable symbol of the “school strike for climate”, which was easily reproduced in various countries. Analysis shows that precisely the regularity and predictability of the actions (every Friday) created an effect of protest ritualisation, thus ensuring its persistence in the media space.

Extinction Rebellion (n.d.), which emerged in the United Kingdom in 2018, has a different media logic. While Fridays for Future is oriented towards long – term and symbolic mobilisation, Extinction Rebellion bets on performativity and radical forms of protest that create high visibility and drama. For instance, in April 2019, activists paralysed central London by blocking bridges, roads, and subway stations, leading to over 1,000 arrests during 10 days of protests (Conrad, 2022). In the autumn of the same year, XR organised a mass “International Rebellion” in 60 cities worldwide, including Berlin, New York, and Sydney, with actions that included staged “deaths” in public spaces and the use of the hourglass symbol as a metaphor for running out of time (Extinction Rebellion UK, 2019). In this case, media coverage is based not so much on sequence and repetition but on the effect of surprise and disruption of the everyday, which attracts audience attention. This indicates that the movement’s media strategy is based on maximising visibility, even if accompanied by controversy or negative perception.

The mobilisational potential of the two initiatives differs substantially yet is simultaneously complementary. Fridays for Future ensures mass participation and longevity through youth strikes and educational messaging, whereas Extinction Rebellion banks on shock tactics and the use of the city’s symbolic space as a stage for climate

performance. In scientific terms, this can be interpreted as the coexistence of two models of digital and media activism: an inclusive model, which integrates broad social groups, and a confrontational model, which provokes radical debate. The result is synergy: the first movement creates a long – term foundation, the second – amplifies the sense of urgency and crisis. The media coverage of both initiatives also has a significant political dimension. In the case of Fridays for Future, attention from international media contributed to the climate issue entering the agenda of parliamentary elections in Germany, as well as being incorporated into the European Union’s climate policy, notably in the adoption of the European Green Deal (Pollex & Berker, 2024). Extinction Rebellion, despite its radicalism, stimulated the emergence of parliamentary hearings in the United Kingdom on the climate emergency, indicating the influence of even those forms of activism not always supported by the public majority. From a scientific perspective, this confirms the thesis that the media presence of contemporary movements is not an additional, but a central resource for political influence.

In the sphere of public opinion formation, digital media perform two interrelated functions: informational – communicative and mobilisation – integrative. The former is manifested in the fact that, thanks to social platforms, citizens have access to diverse data sources, including official announcements, alternative expert assessments, and content from the event participants themselves. This radically alters the balance of power in the public sphere: no longer do only state or corporate structures define the discourse frame, but local communities or individual actors are also able to influence the agenda (Gaupp & Eker, 2024). For example, analysis shows that in the case of the 2019–2020 political protests in Hong Kong, social media created an effect of “extended presence”, where even those who could not physically participate in the events became part of the protest movement through information dissemination, the formation of networked solidarity, and influence on the international audience (Xinyue, 2023). The mobilisation – integrative function is manifested in the ability of digital media to convert public outrage into organised action. This involves the visualisation of protest messages and the possibility of transnational communication. If previously mobilisation had depended on traditional civil society structures, it could also emerge spontaneously, based on emotional triggers spread through the network. This is confirmed by studies of the Black Lives Matter Movement (2021), which achieved global scale precisely because digital media transformed a local event – the death of George Floyd – into a symbolic marker of global injustice. As a result, digital communication not only informed but also structurally united various social groups into a cross – border movement.

The influence of digital media on political decisions is evident on several planes. Firstly, they form a new logic of political representation, where public sentiment is measured not only through traditional sociological surveys but

also through the analysis of data on social networks. Big data processing algorithms allow political institutions to track the dynamics of public sentiment in real time, forcing political actors to adjust their strategies more promptly. An example is the European Commission's reaction to a wave of criticism on X and Facebook following publications about the "insufficient speed" of implementing the European Green Deal: public pressure in the digital space forced the institutions to intensify communication regarding specific stages of the programme's implementation and to increase financial support for individual projects. Secondly, digital media act as a channel of direct influence on political decisions through mass mobilisation, which creates an "urgency effect". In conditions where hashtags or visual images go viral, governments face the threat of delegitimisation if they ignore societal demands. Thus, digital pressure gains strength not only through the number of participants but also through the impossibility of isolating information within national borders.

Thirdly, digital media are increasingly shaping new forms of diplomatic influence, as international actors actively monitor narratives in the digital space. Russia's war against Ukraine demonstrated that media dynamics on X, TikTok, or Telegram can be no less significant for mobilising international support than official diplomatic channels. Thanks to the active use of digital media by the Ukrainian side, it was possible not only to consolidate domestic society but also to create a strong information front that influenced decisions on sanctions, weapons supplies, and humanitarian aid. This confirms the thesis that digital media are becoming a factor in geopolitics, as they are capable of not only reflecting but also modelling international relations (Song, 2025). Digital campaigns in the sphere of climate policy have gained significance in transforming the global agenda, as they have precisely provided a new quality of communication between activists, the public, political structures, and international institutions. Their effects should be considered comprehensively, as digital media not only disseminate information but also set the framework for interpreting climate problems, alter the configuration of political pressure, and bring to the fore new challenges, among which the phenomena of manipulation and disinformation are notable. The influence of these processes is traceable at several levels – societal, political, and international – which allows us to speak of the systemic nature of the digital transformation of climate communication (Parks, 2025).

At the societal level, digital campaigns are changing the very structure of perception of the climate narrative. If environmental issues were previously perceived mostly as remote or secondary, then thanks to the interactive formats of social networks and video platforms, they have become part of the daily information flow. One role is played by emotional visualisation: short videos of natural disasters, infographics on carbon emissions, or personal stories of activists create a sense of direct involvement and

lower the barrier of the problem's abstractness. Fridays for Future campaigns via X and YouTube changed the prioritisation of topics among youth groups: climate came to dominate over issues traditionally at the centre of political socialisation (economic stability, education, employment). Similar processes are occurring in Australia, where through Instagram and Facebook, activists have gained support even among those social groups that previously did not associate themselves with the environmental movement (Hausmann *et al.*, 2025). At the political level, digital campaigns amplify the mechanisms of public influence on decision – making. The digital space creates an "accelerated reaction effect": governments cannot ignore mass visual or textual narratives that go viral. This was the case with the forest fires in Australia, where videos and photos on social networks created a global wave of solidarity and forced the government to reconsider its approach to climate policy. In Kenya, similar processes manifested in local campaigns against deforestation: although their organisers had no significant financial resources, thanks to dissemination through social networks they were able to pressure the government, which led to the strengthening of regulatory restrictions (Shyrokykh & Dellmuth, 2025). Thus, digital campaigns become a catalyst for political change, transforming public outrage into formalised decisions at the level of parliaments, ministries, or municipalities.

At the international level, digital media contribute not only to the circulation of climate narratives but also to the strengthening of global dialogue. Transnational campaigns, such as Extinction Rebellion (n.d.), demonstrate that digital technologies create solidarity networks that transcend nation – states. Participants from different countries not only adopt protest forms but also integrate local problems into the global discourse, emphasising that the climate crisis is universal. In this context, digital media play the role of "infrastructure for global politics", as they precisely allow for the simultaneous coordination of actions, dissemination of new knowledge, and exertion of moral pressure on international institutions.

However, alongside positive effects, digital campaigns also have a downside – the spread of disinformation and manipulative strategies. Climate scepticism actively uses the same media tools as activists, forming counter – narratives. Campaigns are spread on Facebook and X that cast doubt on scientific data regarding global warming or focus attention on the economic risks of transitioning to renewable energy. Research shows that in the USA and Australia, it is precisely through social networks that companies associated with coal or oil extraction have spread "economically justified" doubts about the necessity of climate reforms. This creates information chaos in which public opinion becomes polarised, and political decisions can be delayed. To summarise the effects of digital campaigns, it is advisable to present them in the form of Table 2, which demonstrates different levels of influence and their associated consequences.

Table 2. Effects of digital campaigns in the realm of climate policy

Level of influence	Key effects	Examples	Potential risks
Society	Change in topic prioritisation, increased sensitivity to the climate narrative, engagement of new demographic groups	Fridays for Future in Germany via YouTube and X; Instagram campaigns in Australia	Overload of emotional narratives, fatigue from persistent anxiety
Politics	Increased pressure on governments, acceleration of responses, inclusion of ecology in national agendas	Australian government decisions following extensive wildfires; Kenyan regulations on deforestation	Populism, hasty decision – making under the pressure of mass campaigns
International relations	Creation of global solidarity networks, influence on negotiations within international institutions	Extinction Rebellion as a transnational movement; Fridays for Future at UN climate summits	Use of climate rhetoric for political pressure between states
Information environment	Formation of alternative narratives, mass dissemination of climate data	Videos and infographics on the consequences of climate change	Disinformation campaigns by climate sceptics, corporate manipulation

Source: compiled by the author based on Fridays for Future (n.d.), Extinction Rebellion (n.d.), T. Leimbach & J. Palmer (2022); Y. Lu & Y. Peng (2024), E. Mendenhall *et al.* (2025)

Analysis of the provided table demonstrates that digital campaigns possess an ambivalent character. They simultaneously amplify climate discourse and create risks of its distortion. In the societal dimension, the primary outcome is the raising of awareness and engagement of broad groups of citizens; however, excessive emotional visualisation can lead to diminished effect through “information fatigue”. In the political dimension, digital campaigns facilitate concrete changes in legislation and government strategies, but concurrently increase the likelihood of populism, when politicians make decisions not based on long – term strategies but under pressure from mass opinion. In the international context, digital media act as a powerful tool for solidarity, but at the same time, they can be used as an instrument of diplomatic competition and geopolitical pressure. Finally, the information environment demonstrates the greatest vulnerability: alongside the dissemination of scientifically substantiated data, it becomes a platform for disinformation campaigns, complicating the formation of consensus on climate solutions.

DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted analysis, it has been shown that digital technologies and media have radically transformed climate activism, endowing it with new organisational forms, mobilisation strategies, and channels of political influence. Compared to previous studies, the results revealed both points of intersection and differences in the ways digital platforms are used, as well as in the discursive strategies of different actors. In the work of H. Vu *et al.* (2021), content analysis of Facebook posts by international climate non – governmental organisations showed the dominance of a “diagnostic” frame, focused on defining the problems of climate change, while messaging aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of proposed solutions remained marginal. The authors found that the greatest attention was received by the consequences of climate change already manifesting in the present, whereas emphases on tools for overcoming the crisis were covered significantly less frequently. Comparison with the obtained results confirmed that a similar

dominance of problematisation was evident in the analysed cases, for instance, in the German Fridays for Future, where the mass nature of protests was maintained through constant reminders of future threats. At the same time, the research showed that in the cases of Australia and Kenya, digital platforms served not only to articulate problems but also for the personalisation of solutions and mobilisation of specific population groups. In contrast to the conclusions of H. Vu *et al.*, where communication was reduced to the discursive construction of the problem, the results of the analysis proved that the success of mobilisation depended on the ability to combine diagnostic and motivational levels, creating emotional yet pragmatic messages, precisely through short video formats and streaming broadcasts.

The study by D. Shim (2024) focused on the visual communication of the Fridays for Future movement on Instagram, emphasising the localisation of impacts, the use of performances, and the visualisation of conflictual politics. It was established that it was precisely personalisation and artistic means that allowed activists to become “new narrators” of the climate discourse, moving beyond traditional media coverage. Comparison with the obtained results confirmed that Instagram became an instrument of visual personalisation and emotional interaction; however, the research demonstrated an even wider range of digital platform functions. In contrast to D. Shim’s exclusive focus on Instagram, the analysis showed that the success of movements was determined by the synergy of different media: X ensured speed and coordination, YouTube – depth of communication, and Facebook – local organisation, particularly in countries with less developed traditional media. Thus, the conclusions confirmed the significance of visual communication but simultaneously pointed to the necessity of considering the complex interaction between platforms, which transformed protest not only into a visual but also into a multi – channel media process.

The study by M.O. Márkus (2022) showed that climate activists on Instagram applied the logic of social influencers in their activities, manifested in a high level of personalisation and the demonstration of daily ecological

practices. The conducted research confirmed this trend but emphasised its ambivalent character. Personalisation contributed to increased trust and the formation of a stable emotional connection between activists and the audience, but at the same time limited the ability of movements to create universal symbols that could be scaled globally, as was the case with Fridays for Future. Thus, the results of M.O. Márkus resonated with the conclusions about the effectiveness of micro – influencers in mobilisation; however, the context of this study demonstrated that excessive reliance on this logic threatened the fragmentation of the climate discourse. In the work of B. León *et al.* (2022), the conclusion was the significance of visual communication and its principles: authenticity, narrativity, localisation, and demonstration of consequences for specific communities. The conducted analysis confirmed this logic, for example, in the case of Australia, where personal stories of those affected by fires gained media force precisely through emotional and visual representation. However, the comparative dimension showed that this approach did not work equally in all contexts. While in Australia it fostered a high level of public empathy, in Germany the emphasis remained on symbolic universality (“school strike” as a global sign), which allowed scaling the protest without excessive reliance on individual stories. This indicated that the conclusions of B. León *et al.* had limited applicability outside the context of localised crises.

The work of Z. Tanveer (2024) emphasised that digital tools radically transformed climate movements, creating hybrid models of mobilisation where online coordination and offline actions were combined. The conducted research confirmed this thesis but simultaneously expanded it, showing that it was precisely digital technologies that not only contributed to organisational flexibility but also transformed the very nature of protest. Protest ceased to be an event in the narrow sense and became a prolonged digital process in which symbols, narratives, and discursive frames were formed. Thus, while Z. Tanveer focused on hybridity as an organisational characteristic, the results of the research showed that this hybridity extended to the level of political influence, making movements not merely media subjects but factors of the political process. In the work of V. Rizzoli *et al.* (2024), analysis of tweets about climate change showed that the Fridays for Future movement initially dominated online discussions; however, the content of these discussions varied substantially depending on the national context. It was established that users from countries with high pollution levels and short – term orientation in their communicative practices focused on reactive measures regarding already existing climate change consequences, and sometimes even resorted to problem denial as a defence mechanism. Comparison with the obtained conclusions revealed a similarity in identifying fragmentation and heterogeneity in digital discussions, reflecting the uneven effectiveness of online communication. However, the conducted analysis demonstrated a broader spectrum of consequences: in the cases of Australia and Kenya,

digital strategies allowed overcoming structural and informational constraints, forming localised narratives that not only reacted to consequences but also proposed new future scenarios. This expanded the framework of interpretation, showing that digital platforms are capable of simultaneously reproducing reactivity and creating proactive discourses.

The analysis by A. Kavada & D. Specht (2022) focused on the variety of digital tools used by environmental movements for organisation, coordination, and narrative building. The authors emphasised that tools such as Instagram, digital mapping, and other visual practices allowed activists to overcome geographical barriers, draw attention to environmental injustice, and attract new participants to the movement. Comparison with the results of this research confirmed this pattern, particularly in the example of the global campaigns Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, which achieved synergy between mass scale and spectacle through media. At the same time, analysis demonstrated a deeper division of functions between platforms: X proved optimal for rapid coordination, Instagram for emotional personalisation, YouTube for in – depth problem explanation, while Facebook for local organisation. This allowed for the specification of the conclusions by A. Kavada & D. Specht, emphasising that the comprehensive use of platforms ensured not only the expansion of the spatial scales of activism but also the internal differentiation of its communication strategies.

Summarising the results, it can be argued that previous studies concentrated on separate dimensions of digital communication – from thematic fragmentation and national differences to the instrumental potential of various media and discursive frames in the messages of climate organisations. In contrast, the conducted analysis allowed for the integration of these approaches into a broader picture, demonstrating that digital media not only enhanced mobilisation potential but also transformed the very nature of climate protest, turning it into a constant, multi – channel communication process. This confirmed the necessity of moving beyond the traditional “online – offline” dichotomy and proved that future research should consider digital activism as a complex social phenomenon where technologies, political structures, and cultural practices intersect.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted analysis has established that digital technologies and media have transformed environmental protests and climate activism, becoming not only a tool of communication but also a structure – forming element that defines the organisational forms, mobilisation strategies, and political influence of movements. The research revealed that social networks, such as X, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, perform differentiated functions: X provided the rapid dissemination of slogans and coordination of mass actions, as in the case of the German Fridays for Future; Instagram became key for visual personalisation and emotional engagement through imagery and short videos, enabling activists to build authentic relationships with

audiences; YouTube ensured depth of communication through documentary and educational materials; and Facebook served as a platform for local organisation, for instance in regions with limited access to traditional media, as in Kenya. A comparative analysis of the cases of Germany, Australia, and Kenya demonstrated that the effectiveness of digital strategies significantly depended on the socio – cultural and political context: in Germany, a model of global – network activism was observed, focusing on mass participation and systemic influence on the political agenda; in Australia, an emotional – visual approach prevailed, utilising personalised narratives and stories of those affected; in Kenya, digital technologies performed a compensatory function, overcoming the limitations of institutional media and ensuring the mobilisation of local communities.

The research also identified the influence of new media formats, particularly short videos (TikTok, Reels, Shorts) and streaming broadcasts, which, due to their conciseness, visual richness, and effect of real – time presence, radically enhanced the resonance of protest events, transforming them from local actions into global media events, as occurred during the Extinction Rebellion campaigns in London. Global initiatives, such as Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, achieved synergy of mobilisation models thanks to digital platforms: the former ensured mass participation and longevity through the ritualisation of protest (weekly Friday strikes), while the latter achieved high visibility and drama through performative and confrontational actions, which together amplified pressure on political institutions, compelling the governments of Germany and the United Kingdom to include climate issues in the agenda of parliamentary hearings and national strategies. However, the research also uncovered significant risks

and contradictions of digital activism: firstly, activists faced the ethical dilemma of using platforms based on capitalist logic and causing environmental harm to fight the very systemic crises these same technologies exacerbate; secondly, the polarisation of the information space was observed due to the spread of disinformation campaigns by climate sceptics, who used the same digital tools to manipulate public opinion; thirdly, communication effectiveness proved to be uneven – analysis of tweets showed that users from the most polluted countries and countries with a short – term orientation more frequently discussed reactive measures regarding the consequences of climate change, sometimes even denying the problem, which complicated the representation of alternative future scenarios. The main limitation of the research was its methodological reliance on the analysis of already published data and case studies, rather than conducting primary empirical collection and analysis of digital content, which may have limited the depth and originality of the conclusions. A promising direction for future research is conducting comparative longitudinal analysis of big data from various digital platforms to identify long – term trends in the transformation of climate discourse and its impact on specific political decisions in different countries.

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Education, media, and the transformation of social and cultural structures

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Abstract. This study aimed to determine how digital educational platforms transform the social and cultural practices of young people and influence the formation of new mechanisms of social mobility. The research encompassed three countries with distinct educational and cultural traditions: South Korea, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The methodology was grounded in a stepwise analysis of official documents and statistical data, corporate reports, and academic studies, as well as a comparative assessment of the key parameters of digital platforms, including value orientations, mobility mechanisms, and cultural educational practices. The analysis demonstrated that the national Korean platform of massive open online courses operated as an institutionalised channel for converting young people's academic achievements into symbolic and educational capital, while simultaneously supporting collective forms of online learning and group identity. In the United States, an examination of the Coursera platform and the educational segment of YouTube indicated the predominance of personalised learning trajectories, a focus among young people on career mobility, and the entrepreneurial use of knowledge, particularly through certification programmes and practices of creating and monetising educational content. The analysis of these cases made it possible to delineate specific models of media education that developed around each platform and shaped the modes through which young people accumulated cultural capital. At the same time, YouTube emerged as an environment that fosters an attention economy, where educational channels with audiences in the millions became a source of both knowledge and income for content creators. In the United Kingdom, the principal focus was placed on the BBC Bitesize platform, which during the pandemic reached at least six million users per week and became an important instrument for equalising opportunities in examination preparation for pupils from low-income families. The practical significance of the study lies in its potential application to the development of educational strategies that take cultural specificities into account and enhance social mobility and equality of access to knowledge in the digital age

Keywords: career benefits; attention economy; cultural capital; collectivism; mobility; certificate

INTRODUCTION

Educational transformations driven by digital media constitute an important factor in the reshaping of social and cultural structures. The proliferation of educational platforms and media resources manifests not only within the sphere of formal education but also in the wider context of youth socialisation, the formation of values, and models of cultural interaction. The underlying issue was that traditional educational institutions can no longer remain the sole transmitters of knowledge and social norms, as digital media have begun to function as parallel channels for learning, social mobility, and identity construction. Within this context, a need emerged for a comprehensive

investigation into the mechanisms through which educational media influence the values and cultural practices of young people.

The interaction between media and society has been explored in a range of studies that have identified the principal trends and implications of this process. P. Hodgkinson (2024) emphasised that the media function not only as channels for transmitting information but also as key social institutions that structurally shape the cultural environment. He observed that the interrelationship between the media and society is manifested in the continual reproduction of social hierarchies and the formation of symbolic

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resources that enable the integration of individuals into collective practices. Changes in social structure influenced by the media were further supported by the findings of K. Farooq *et al.* (2021), who noted that social networks act as catalysts for societal transformations by facilitating the rapid dissemination of ideas and stimulating social engagement. Their study demonstrated that social media can lower barriers to participation in public processes and generate new forms of civic interaction. The research of M. Alenezi (2023) placed particular emphasis on the role of digital educational institutions in higher education. The author argued that digital platforms are becoming not merely supplementary tools but fully integrated components of university infrastructure, providing not only accessibility but also flexibility in educational trajectories.

Conceptual foundations for analysing educational processes in the media environment were proposed by M. Zembylas (2019). He demonstrated that emotional capital in education should be examined in relation to cultural and social structures, drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical framework. His research established that media-based learning cannot be reduced to technical or content-related dimensions but includes emotional resources that shape motivation and the effectiveness of youth engagement in the educational process. Particular attention needed to be directed to the challenges of the digital transformation of educational systems. F. Brunetti *et al.* (2020) concluded that the digitalisation of education requires multi-level interaction among universities, state institutions, technology companies, and the student community. The authors emphasised that stable outcomes can be achieved only under conditions of broad, multi-stakeholder coordination. Equally significant were the findings of S. Kotilainen *et al.* (2020), who indicated that the algorithmic governance of social media generates new challenges for young people. Their study demonstrated that recommendation systems influence the formation of educational and cultural orientations among pupils and students, particularly through the filtering of accessible content.

In the sphere of students' educational attitudes, the analysis conducted by A.S. Kandpal *et al.* (2023) proved illustrative. They found that young people perceive social media as a convenient and accessible tool for learning that can offer flexibility when combined with other life circumstances. At the same time, students remained critical of the quality and reliability of the information obtained from these sources, indicating an awareness of the potential risks associated with superficial or inaccurate content. The authors highlighted that the principal factor underpinning the appeal of social media in the educational process is the possibility of individualising learning and aligning it with one's own interests and needs, thereby creating personalised developmental trajectories. An important continuation of this discussion was provided by the analysis of E. Theophilou *et al.* (2024), who demonstrated that the format in which educational materials are presented on social media plays a decisive role in determining the level of

student engagement. They demonstrated that the integration of educational narratives into social networks enables the formation of dynamic learning scenarios that combine interactivity, visualisation, and multimedia elements. This confirmed that cultural and media forms in digital education have become as significant as academic content. From the perspective of media literacy, the conclusions of S. Pereira & P. Moura (2022) were particularly salient. They observed that levels of digital competence remained uneven and that the development of critical information-processing skills occurred in an unsystematic manner. This underscores that digital educational platforms perform not only an informative but also a formative function, contributing to the development of young people's cultural capital. In this context, the observations of C.S. Cagatin (2024) acquired particular relevance. C.S. Cagatin stressed that social networks are reshaping the rules of interaction in the digital era: they establish new formats of communication and define societal priorities, thereby creating cultural frameworks for educational and social experience.

Although a substantial body of research has already been accumulated that explains the relationship between the media and society, comparative studies addressing national specificities of institutional integration, cultural practices, and educational orientations remain scarce. The study aimed to identify the mechanisms through which educational media platforms become instruments for transforming societal values and practices. To achieve this objective, the following tasks were set: to determine the structural and semantic parameters of the functioning of national educational media platforms; to analyse their role in supporting the social mobility of young people; and to examine the cultural practices that developed around educational media.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted as a comparative multi-case analysis using a mixed qualitative-quantitative assessment of secondary data. The focus was on the national educational-media ecosystems of South Korea, the USA, and the United Kingdom. The selection of these countries was based on the following criteria: distinct historical and cultural orientations; the presence of institutionally established platforms representing different models of knowledge legitimisation: Korean Massive Open Online Courses (K-MOOC, n.d.), and the Academic Credit Bank System (n.d.) (CBS) in Korea. Coursera (n.d.), YouTube (n.d.) in the United States, and BBC Bitesize (n.d.) (BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation) in the United Kingdom. The research was carried out in four consecutive stages. The first stage involved defining the cases and establishing relevance criteria. Three cases were formulated for each country. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (a) the presence of a nationally significant educational media platform or linkages to formal education (K-MOOC/CBS; Coursera/YouTube; BBC Bitesize); (b) the availability of quantitative indicators of reach, completion, and formal/market recognition; (c) the presence of

independent external assessments or international reviews. At this stage, the institutional contours of each case and the preliminary expectations regarding the mechanisms of

mobility and cultural practices were described. The second stage focused on data collection and normalisation. For each country, a document sample was compiled (Table 1).

Table 1. Sources of materials for analysis

Country	Type of material	Source
Korea	Official descriptions of K-MOOC/NILE Government statistics and reports	K-MOOC (n.d.); NILE (n.d.) (National Institute for Lifelong Education); Government Policies... (n.d.); Results of the... (2018)
	International reviews	OECD (2021) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)
	Data on CBS and degrees	H. Lee & R. Lee (2024)
USA	Studies on the YouTube/edutuber ecosystem	J. BelloBravo <i>et al.</i> (2021); C. Pasquel-López <i>et al.</i> (2022)
	Economic assessments of the creative industry	Exploring YouTube's... (2024)
United Kingdom	Official descriptions of Bitesize	BBC Bitesize (n.d.)
	Education policy analysis	K. Van Lieshout (2020); M. Mazzucato <i>et al.</i> (2020)
	Indicators of media use among children and young people	Children and Parents... (2023; 2024)
	Analysis of digital poverty	K. Allmann (2022); Nominet (2023)
	Subject-specific studies and content briefs	Content Brief BBC (2022); M.M. Davies (2025)

Source: compiled by the author

The data were standardised using shared units of comparison (reach, completion/certification, forms of recognition, examples of cultural practices), after which a three-level coding scheme was applied in accordance with the research tasks: orientations and values (criteria: the stated purpose of the platform; types of learning ethics; forms of social signalling such as certificates and badges); channels of social mobility (formal integration, market recognition, compensatory effect) (number of registered users, proportion of users reporting career benefits, number of degrees obtained through CBS, weekly reach during lockdowns); and educational-cultural practices (forms of community organisation and media behaviour). Operational indicators were specified for each code. For example, formal integration was defined by the presence of mechanisms enabling the translation of on-line credits into official qualifications (K-MOOC + CBS); market recognition was measured through empirical evidence of career benefits or income growth; and the compensatory effect was examined using data on reductions in inequalities of access.

The results for each case were compared using a unified matrix (values → mobility mechanisms → cultural practices). A cross-country comparison was then conducted based on the key analytical parameters, accompanied by contextual validation to verify the alignment of the findings with national education policies and structural specificities. Reliability criteria included consistency of indicators across independent sources and the replicability of the coding logic. The final stage involved comparing the experiences of South Korea, the USA, and the United Kingdom across three criteria – value orientations, mechanisms of social mobility, and cultural educational practices – which enabled the identification of both differences and common features within their respective digital educational environments.

RESULTS

K-MOOC within the educational networks of South Korea

South Korea has traditionally been characterised by a strong orientation towards academic achievement. In the country's educational discourse, high academic performance and success in examinations are viewed not only as individual accomplishments but also as social values that shape a person's position within society. The launch in 2015 of the national K-MOOC (n.d.) platform, administered by the NILE (n.d.), created an institutional mechanism for transferring established educational practices into the digital environment. K-MOOC courses, developed by the country's leading universities, combine the traditional emphasis on rigorous academic preparation with innovative forms of distance learning. Young platform users acquire not only knowledge but also symbolic educational capital through certificates and badges. This tangible outcome of course participation reinforces the perception that educational attainment is an attribute of social prestige. As noted in an analytical report by Korea JoongAng Daily (Lee, 2024), K-MOOC certificates have gradually gained significance for students as evidence of discipline, persistence, and readiness to study beyond university requirements.

A second important element is the communicative function of the educational social networks integrated into the platform. K-MOOC supports discussion forums, collaborative groups, and other tools for interaction. Participants exchange experiences and resources and assist one another in completing tasks. This establishes a new educational ethic in which not only individual outcomes but also collective collaboration is of significance. Social presence and interaction with other participants constitute key factors influencing the continuation of MOOC learning among Korean students (Park *et al.*, 2022). This

indicates that the platform fosters not only individual development but also the formation of group identity. Thus, in Korea, a value system is emerging within the digital environment in which individual academic success is combined with an ethic of collective cooperation, and educational achievements become markers of social prestige and group solidarity.

An important aspect of K-MOOC (n.d.) is its role in supporting social mobility, particularly for young people from regional and socially vulnerable groups. The establishment of the national MOOC platform formed part of a government strategy aimed at improving access to high-quality education and overcoming educational barriers (Government Policies..., n.d.). According to the Ministry of Education of South Korea, as of 2018, the platform had 279,000 registered users, with a total of 581,000 course enrolments (Results of the..., 2018). A distinctive feature of the Korean system is the integration of K-MOOC with the CBS, which enables credits earned in online courses to be counted towards official academic degrees. According to research, in 2022, more than 40,000 individuals in Korea obtained a bachelor's degree through the CBS, using K-MOOC courses as part of their study load (Lee & Lee, 2024). This indicates that the platform is effectively integrated into the formal higher education system and can provide the official prerequisites for advancement in the labour market. The impact of K-MOOC on graduate earnings remains under-researched; however, existing international data suggest a generally positive effect of MOOCs. Analysis shows that for employed participants, engagement with MOOCs often serves as a catalyst for career progression or a change in professional field, even if it does not always result in an immediate increase in income (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Furthermore, the OECD report on skills strategy implementation in Korea notes that K-MOOC is regarded by the government as a tool for supporting the professional development of young people and adults, particularly by offering additional opportunities for reskilling and career guidance (OECD, 2021). This confirms that the platform functions not only as an educational resource but also as an instrument of socio-economic policy. Accordingly, K-MOOC allows students with fewer initial advantages to access courses from leading universities, officially recognises earned credits, and is considered a state resource for enhancing competitiveness in the labour market.

The emergence of K-MOOC has triggered changes not only in the educational but also in the cultural practices of young people. Platform courses have become part of daily digital routines: users actively discuss completed modules on social media, share results and certificates, and organise informal groups for collaborative learning. Such practices take on the character of educational challenges when friends or students agree to complete a particular course collectively (Lee *et al.*, 2023). These transforms learning into a form of cultural activity that competes with other digital practices, such as gaming or media consumption. Another significant phenomenon is the integration of

learning outcomes into the digital identity of young people. K-MOOC certificates and badges are increasingly used in personal profiles on professional and social networks (Zou *et al.*, 2021). They serve as markers of competence and enhance cultural capital within the community. In this sense, educational achievements become not only an academic but also a cultural resource, shaping the position of young people within the digital environment. Furthermore, K-MOOC fosters interest-based communities that extend beyond the course content. For instance, courses in ecology or social sciences form the basis for discussion groups where broader cultural and social issues are debated. This contributes to education becoming an integral part of cultural life, with knowledge emerging as a subject of collective production and consumption.

Digital educational environments: Coursera and YouTube in the USA

In the USA, the development of platforms such as Coursera (n.d.) and the widespread use of YouTube (n.d.) are transforming approaches to self-directed learning and shaping youth values, in which individualisation and pragmatism play a central role. From the perspective of Coursera, one of the core values for users is the personalisation of the learning pathway. Learning trajectories become tailored to individual interests, pace, and life circumstances: students can select individual courses, professional certificates, specialisations, or even full-length programmes. The Coursera (2023) notes that 85% of users chose the platform with the aim of changing careers, moving to a new role, or developing new skills. This indicates that educational motivation is often oriented towards personal development, and the platform's tools actively support this aspiration. The platform also emphasises achievement as a core value: Coursera monitors participant outcomes and reports that 77% of users indicate their engagement contributed to career advantages – such as securing a new job, receiving a promotion, or acquiring useful skills. YouTube, in turn, through educational channels and content creation targeted at young audiences, promotes a pragmatic approach to knowledge: knowledge should be profitable, meaning skills that can be applied, monetised, or leveraged for career advancement (Pasquel-López *et al.*, 2022). Within the YouTube context, educational videos often combine instruction with practical demonstration, and learning series are integrated with courses or projects. In this way, young people can acquire knowledge via YouTube as a supplement to – or alternative for – formal courses, but with a strong focus on efficiency, applicability, and measurable outcomes.

One key question is whether Coursera and YouTube provide genuine pathways for social mobility. In many cases, the answer is positive, although with certain limitations and ambiguities. Coursera provides access to courses from numerous leading universities in the USA and worldwide (for example, Stanford, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Michigan). This enables individuals who, for various reasons, cannot attend university or are outside

campus environments to acquire knowledge and earn certificates from prestigious institutions. The Coursera (2021) notes that over 20 million new learners joined the platform within a year, often from regions where traditional higher education infrastructure is limited. This indicates that Coursera functions as a mechanism for expanding educational opportunities. A study conducted in Costa Rica (Novella *et al.*, 2024) analysed the learning of 52,000 Coursera users, of whom 72% reported career benefits following course completion, such as securing a new job, receiving a promotion, or changing their field of work. This suggests that for the majority of users, the platform serves as a catalyst for mobility. The Coursera (2024) also provides data on workforce participation and demographics, enabling an assessment of how the platform may affect a broad spectrum of users in the USA.

Although YouTube (n.d.) is not formally an educational platform, it operates as an open knowledge space. In many cases, YouTube videos serve as an initial or supplementary resource for individuals seeking to learn independently, outside the framework of formal education. YouTube creates an attention economy, in which content that captures and maintains viewers' attention is prioritised in recommendations, monetisation, and reach. Edutubers (n.d.) are content creators specialising in educational topics, often combining pedagogical skills, presentation, creativity, and business motivation. Young educational content creators can earn income through partner programmes, advertising, and audience support. In this context, young people do not simply consume lectures – they interact with creators, comment, ask questions, and form online communities. An analysis of the recommendation network among educational channels on YouTube revealed that channels with high levels of digital engagement are more likely to recommend other channels, fostering a network of support and audience sharing (Pasquel-López *et al.*, 2022). This indicates that edutubers operate not as isolated units but as part of a networked system in which exchange and mutual visibility are embedded in the culture. Thus, YouTube does not merely transmit knowledge – it can serve as a source of income or professional activity for content creators. For example, YouTube reports that its creative ecosystem generates tens of thousands of jobs in the USA and contributes substantially to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Exploring YouTube's..., 2024). Consequently, young people may view knowledge as a potential product that can be packaged, broadcast, and monetised – shifting perceptions of education towards an investment capable of producing not only personal capital but also material gain.

In the United States, Coursera and YouTube have become more than mere learning tools – they have transformed cultural practices among young people, creating new educational modes of interaction and presence in the digital space. YouTube is widely used as a tool for informal education: audiences watch lectures, short topic explanations, DIY (Do It Yourself) tutorials, demonstrations of mathematical problem-solving, programming lessons,

language instruction, and more. Research indicates that educational YouTube channels are often used as a supplement to formal courses or as independent resources for self-directed learning, particularly where traditional resources are limited (Bello-Bravo *et al.*, 2021). The cultural practice here lies in the way watching educational videos becomes a daily activity, sometimes integrated into young people's media routines (for example, during commutes or leisure time). Young people can discuss videos in groups, create themed playlists, and recommend channels to one another. These practices foster alternative educational communities that are not tied to formal institutions but instead revolve around interests, learning styles, and collaborative discussion.

Thus, in the USA, the penetration of Coursera and YouTube is driving a transformation of education into an interactive value system, in which individualisation, pragmatism, and personal development occupy a central role. Coursera provides access to academic-level educational resources, thereby activating mechanisms of social mobility. YouTube simultaneously functions as a platform for informal learning and media-based education, where practices such as viewing, commenting, and content creation foster new educational communities. Edutubers become cultural figures who transmit knowledge as a form of production.

Online learning for young people via BBC Bitesize

In the United Kingdom, the BBC Bitesize (n.d.) platform serves as a key component of the digital educational infrastructure, with other online resources complementing its role in shaping young people's educational practices. One defining feature of British education policy is the commitment to inclusivity and equal opportunities. BBC Bitesize is designed as a free resource to support students in publicly funded schools, regardless of their social or economic background. The platform provides learning materials, tests, interactive exercises, videos, and articles aligned with the curricula of the key stages of education (Key Stages 1-5) across different parts of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) (Davies, 2025). This approach emphasises universal access: Bitesize is often used as a supplement to classroom lessons or as material for independent learning, particularly during periods when schools are inaccessible (e.g. during lockdowns). Such a focus highlights that young people in the UK increasingly view educational resources as a shared good, to which access should be equal. At the same time, other online platforms – such as government education resources (school websites), or platforms like Seneca (n.d.), the Times Educational Supplement – TES (n.d.), and Oak National Academy (n.d.) – promote similar practices, aiming to reach all regions and social groups. In parallel, the value of critical thinking and cultural diversity is being fostered. Online materials frequently include case studies, texts, or exercises that cover a range of historical, cultural, and social contexts. For example, Bitesize provides resources in history, literature, and citizenship education that examine the roles of empires, colonial legacies, issues

of racial inequality, and social justice. The aim is for students not merely to memorise facts but to develop skills in analysis, comparison of different perspectives, and critical engagement with sources.

A key aspect of BBC Bitesize's function is its role in reducing educational barriers for students from diverse social backgrounds, particularly those with limited access to private tutors, preparatory courses, or additional support. During pandemic learning, Bitesize proved vital as a stabiliser of access to knowledge when schools were closed or operating remotely. It has been noted that the digital divide – for instance, 9% of households with children lacked a suitable device and 2% lacked home internet access – affected students' ability to engage in distance learning (Coleman, 2021). Students from less affluent families were more likely to miss out on fully engaging with online materials. In this context, BBC Bitesize functioned as a platform with lower access barriers (free of charge, optimised for various devices, and structured by age and curriculum), enabling students to continue learning even when other resources were unavailable.

Evaluations of BBC Bitesize's effectiveness after 2020 primarily highlight its role in ensuring educational continuity and equal access to curriculum-aligned materials, rather than in improving test scores. The OECD analytical case (Van Lieshout, 2020) describes Bitesize as a free learning support platform, structured around the key stages across different United Kingdom jurisdictions, which was rapidly deployed for remote learning during COVID-19 and used by schools as a structured resource for revision and independent study. Additionally, an institutional study by the UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose considers the BBC's educational response to the coronavirus a notable example of public value creation by a public broadcaster, emphasising the significance of BBC educational services in maintaining student engagement during a crisis (Mazzucato *et al.*, 2020). At the behavioural level, data from 2023-2024 show widespread online learning among children aged 3-17 in the United Kingdom, evidenced by regular internet access and the use of digital resources for learning activities, indirectly confirming the demand for and usefulness of online educational platforms such as Bitesize in young people's everyday learning practices (Children and Parents..., 2023; 2024). Thus, Bitesize functions as a tool for reducing inequalities in exam preparation and progression to higher stages of education: students with limited access are better able to compete with those who have additional resources.

The factor of digital poverty must also be considered: 32% of young people are at risk of exclusion due to lack of access to a device or the internet, directly affecting their ability to use Bitesize or other online resources (Allmann, 2022). According to the Nominet (2023), 14% of young people in the UK do not have access to a laptop or desktop computer, and 15% lack broadband access at home. These limitations mean that even a well-designed platform may fail to reach some young people if basic technological infrastructure is unavailable. Thus, Bitesize and similar services largely function as equalisers of opportunity, but their impact is constrained by the boundaries of digital infrastructure.

Online resources in the United Kingdom are actively used by young people not only for school curricula but also for extracurricular and self-directed learning. Many students turn to Bitesize, YouTube, educational blogs, and EdTech platforms like Seneca (n.d.), FutureLearn (n.d.), OpenLearn (n.d.) as sources for reviewing material, deepening understanding, or clarifying complex topics. These resources are often integrated into daily learning routines beyond the classroom, including watching explanatory videos, practising with tests, and preparing for homework. There is also a growing integration of multimedia content in the development of cultural literacy and competencies among young people. For example, Bitesize frequently incorporates interactive animations, illustrations, infographics, audio, and video materials to explain both scientific and humanities topics. This approach supports the development of visual thinking skills, the interpretation of complex content, and the ability to work with multimedia. Bitesize also engages students in activities related to health, physical fitness, and emotional well-being by integrating digital content that links learning with life skills (Content Brief BBC, 2022). Such formats provide a holistic combination of academic knowledge and practical skills, transforming digital resources into a fully integrated component of young people's everyday educational experience.

Comparative analysis of media education in socio-cultural change

In South Korea, K-MOOC is positioned as a national educational infrastructure that supports lifelong learning (Table 2). For participants, a key factor in satisfaction is social presence – interaction with instructors and fellow students – for which increases the likelihood of course completion and the intention to continue learning. This underscores the importance of community-based learning forms, reflecting collectivist orientations.

Table 2. Value orientations and their implementation in media education

Country	Dominant orientations	Examples of implementation in educational media	Specific characteristics/data
South Korea	Collectivism, an academic discipline	Social presence in K-MOOC enhances satisfaction and course completion	Number of registered K-MOOC users in 2018: 279,000
USA	Individualism, entrepreneurship	68% of Coursera learners reported career benefits	Coursera courses often focus on “career pathways”; over 100 partner universities provide personalised learning trajectories

Table 2. Continued

Country	Dominant orientations	Examples of implementation in educational media	Specific characteristics/data
United Kingdom	Inclusivity, cultural diversity	Access to Bitesize for all social groups; support during COVID-19	Bitesize reaches students aged 5-16 across the UK; materials are adapted to national curricula in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Source: compiled by the author based on Results of the... (2018), T.J. Park *et al.* (2022), Coursera (2023), Children and Parents... (2023)

Educational media reflect pre-existing social values rather than creating them from scratch. In South Korea, digital formats are organically integrated into a model of collective ethics, where the emphasis lies not only on outcomes but also on the process of shared participation. In the USA, the individual dimension of education is emphasised through the structuring of courses around personal professional goals, positioning the platform as a tool for autonomous choice. The British example, by contrast, is distinguished by a commitment to incorporating social diversity into learning content, reinforcing the principle

of educational equity. Thus, in different countries, digital educational environments not only complement but also strengthen the cultural orientations historically embedded in the educational sphere. In South Korea, the CBS mechanism allows K-MOOC results to be integrated into formal educational trajectories (Table 3). In 2022, over 40,000 individuals obtained a bachelor's degree using CBS credits, making K-MOOC an official tool for qualification advancement. In the USA, Coursera provides access to world-class university courses, although low completion rates remain a significant barrier.

Table 3. Educational media as instruments of social mobility

Country	Platforms	Mobility mechanism	Verified outcomes	Additional characteristics
South Korea	K-MOOC + CBS	Credits counted towards formal degrees	40,000 individuals obtained degrees in 2022	Enables a combination of online courses with offline programmes; CBS is integrated into the national qualification recognition system
USA	Coursera	Access to university courses; certificates	+20% income after Google IT Support	77% of learners report career benefits; over 100 million registered users
USA	YouTube	Monetisation of educational content; attention economy	Creation of sustainable knowledge channels	Popular channels have millions of subscribers; edutubers earn income through advertising and Patreon
United Kingdom	BBC Bitesize	Exam preparation support	Demonstrated benefits during COVID-19	During lockdowns, at least 6 million users accessed Bitesize weekly; coverage included students from low-income families

Source: developed by the author based on M. Mazzucato *et al.* (2020), R. Novella *et al.* (2024)

The table material indicates that the impact of platform use is directly linked to the mechanisms by which outcomes are institutionally embedded. In South Korea, the credit system transforms online courses into formal qualifications, integrating the platform into official educational policy. In the USA, there is a clear economic outcome – income increases and career changes – demonstrating the significance of employer recognition of certificates. YouTube in the United States illustrates a different type of mobility, where popularity and audience engagement become resources for the creation of a new educational market. In the United Kingdom, the impact of Bitesize is less about individual outcomes and more about reducing inequalities between student groups with unequal access to resources. Thus, mobility models differ across the three countries,

ranging from formal integration to economic benefit or a compensatory effect.

Educational media are not limited to the transmission of knowledge; they function as spaces for social interaction. They generate new forms of communication between young people, educators, and content creators, creating an environment in which knowledge becomes a component of cultural exchange. These processes manifest differently across countries: from informal study groups in South Korea to communities centred around educational channels in the USA, and the integration of digital content with offline activities in the United Kingdom (Table 4). Such practices reflect the characteristics of local educational cultures while simultaneously creating conditions for the emergence of transnational educational communities.

Table 4. Cultural practices associated with educational media

Country	Types of practices	Forms of implementation	Specific examples/data
South Korea	Study groups, knowledge fan clubs	Notes, knowledge challenges	Student chats on Kakao; sharing exam preparation materials via K-MOOC
USA	Edutubers, online communities	CrashCourse, 3Blue1Brown, Discord groups	CrashCourse has over 14 million subscribers; 3Blue1Brown has over 5 million; both actively engage with learners via Patreon and Discord

Table 4. Continued

Country	Types of practices	Forms of implementation	Specific examples/data
United Kingdom	Online-offline integration	BBC Bitesize + Schools Tour, multimedia	In the 2023-2024 academic year, Schools Tour visited 167 schools; Bitesize multimedia materials cover all core subjects

Source: compiled by the author based on Kakao (n.d.), CrashCourse (n.d.), 3Blue1Brown (n.d.), BBC Bitesize school...(n.d.), Patreon (n.d.), Discord (n.d.), K. Van Lieshout (2020), G. Zhang *et al.* (2022)

The examples presented demonstrate that educational media create new forms of community that extend beyond traditional educational institutions. In South Korea, students actively organise informal groups where learning is complemented by mutual support and social exchange. In the USA, the figure of the edutuber takes centre stage, combining the roles of educator, mediator, and entrepreneur to form resilient educational networks. The British example emphasises the integration of digital and offline initiatives, creating a more multidimensional educational space. All these forms share a common feature: they emerge at the intersection of formal and informal learning and foster the development of new cultural practices. This approach illustrates that digital resources function not merely as channels for knowledge transmission but also as spaces for social interaction and cultural creativity.

The comparative analysis of the three national cases revealed differences in the impact of educational media platforms on sociocultural structures. In South Korea, media-educational tools reinforce a collectivist educational ethic and learning discipline, whereas in the USA, they are oriented towards individualised development trajectories and entrepreneurial mindsets, and in the United Kingdom, they prioritise inclusivity and cultural diversity. Analysis of social mobility indicated that its effectiveness is directly dependent on the institutional recognition of achievements and the reduction of digital barriers: in South Korea, the Academic Credit Bank System (n.d.) plays a central role; in the USA, the economic effect of Coursera's certificate programmes is evident; and in the United Kingdom, BBC Bitesize contributes to equalising educational opportunities across different social groups. The cultural practices that emerge around these platforms take new forms – ranging from study communities and knowledge fan clubs to edutuber networks and hybrid school-online structures. Overall, educational media function not only as instruments for knowledge transmission but also as sociocultural institutions that shape youth identity, influence mobility, and facilitate the accumulation of cultural capital.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that digital educational ecosystems operate as mechanisms for converting learning achievements into social prestige and mobility: in South Korea through formal recognition (K-MOOC + CBS), in the United States through individualised trajectories and the attention economy (Coursera/YouTube), and in the United Kingdom through a public service of inclusion (BBC Bitesize). In the Korean case, certificates and credits obtained through the Credit Bank System acted as a

channel for converting educational resources into recognised qualifications. In contrast, in the USA, Coursera certificates and visibility on YouTube enhanced cultural and social capital through public profiles and communities. This logic of bidirectional conversion between digital and social/cultural capital aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's framework as interpreted by D.C. Gomez (2021), in which youth digital capital is described as a reciprocal exchange with economic, social, and cultural capital. The similarity lies in identifying exchange mechanisms, while the difference is determined by national institutional frameworks: in Spain, the emphasis was on stratified access, whereas in South Korea, the state infrastructure for recognition was central.

Another aspect concerns motivational dynamics and risks that reduce course completion rates. In the USA, individualised trajectories and pragmatic expectations of career outcomes coexisted with the high appeal of distracting platforms. The experience of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) as a driver of continuous engagement with social media is discussed by P. Gosain & K. Yadav (2020): the fear of missing socially significant signals increased the frequency of engagement but adversely affected well-being. A common finding across studies is that FOMO amplifies participation in digital environments; the distinction lies in the fact that, within US educational ecosystems, the pragmatic vector (career outcomes) partially mitigated the risks of attention fragmentation, whereas in general social media, effect-driven motivation dominated without an educational objective. From the perspective of microlearning formats, the findings indicated that short, algorithmically promoted content units (such as YouTube videos) enhanced the practical acquisition of basic skills and expanded reach. In this context, A.S. Mooy *et al.* (2025) demonstrated that using TikTok as an educational medium supported the acquisition of English among young people through mini-lessons and repetitive patterns. The commonality across studies lay in recognising the effectiveness of short formats for developing micro-language competencies, while differences were determined by the parameters of institutional embedding: in South Korea, microformats complemented formally recognised curricula (K-MOOC), whereas the TikTok (n.d.) study emphasised non-institutional, platform-driven learning.

Regarding teachers' attitudes towards social media, the United Kingdom results highlighted the accumulation of publicly accessible resources (Bitesize) as an acceptable compromise between content quality and broad accessibility. A similar focus was noted in M.A. Haşiloğlu *et al.* (2020), where science teachers evaluated social media as a tool for enhancing motivation under conditions of

controlled content and clear pedagogical objectives. The similarity lay in recognising social media as a supplement to classroom teaching, while the distinction was that the UK case relied on standardised, curriculum-aligned content from a public broadcaster, whereas teacher surveys discussed heterogeneous platforms with varying pedagogical quality. The critical boundary for screen use identified in the findings functioned as a structural limiter: digital inclusion was beneficial only as long as cognitive-safe intensity and duration were not exceeded. In the study by A. Raheem *et al.* (2023), risks associated with excessive screen time for children's language development were reported. The intersection with other findings lay in the caution regarding the costs of digitalisation for younger cohorts; the divergence concerned target groups: the UK case primarily involved school-aged children within a supplementary learning context, whereas the medical-linguistic conclusions focused on age thresholds and early developmental stages.

At the level of cultural practices surrounding books and educational media content, the US findings demonstrated stable networked communities around edutubers, playlists, and discussion forums. A systematic review by L. Santa María *et al.* (2022) noted that online socialisation in reading and learning was based on community-building practices, including recommendations, fan texts, and peer mentoring. The similarity across studies lay in recognising the multi-channel socialisation of knowledge, while differences were determined by thematic focus: the review predominantly addressed literary and humanities practices, whereas the US results also included STEM content, emphasising practical application and monetisation. Another aspect concerned inclusion and special educational needs. In the UK case, the public resource Bitesize acted as a mechanism for equalising access, lowering barriers during periods of crisis. In a similar vein, M.A. Alomari *et al.* (2023) examined the role of media in the social construction of education for children with special needs, emphasising the importance of adaptive content and supportive communities. The affinity was evident in the perception of media as an engagement infrastructure; the difference lay in the degree of specialisation, as Bitesize addressed a broad school audience, whereas the authors' study emphasised targeted interventions for specific groups.

In the realm of identity, the US findings highlighted that visibility tools – such as certificates, badges, and public profiles – functioned as markers of competence. In a related vein, M. Fidan *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that adolescents structured motivational usage maps on Instagram, intertwining educational, aesthetic, and social goals to form self-presentation narratives. The similarity lay in the role of visual-symbolic attributes as signals of capital; the difference was that the findings focused on educational ecosystems, while the authors' research described a broader adolescent "media self" extending beyond educational utility. Regarding the role of the public broadcaster during periods of turbulence, the UK findings identified Bitesize as

a tool for learning continuity and cultural literacy. This institutional role was also examined by M.M. Davies (2022), who analysed how the BBC balanced educational services, children's programming, and its public mandate. The commonality across studies lay in the argument that content held public value by supporting engagement and equal access; the divergence concerned scale: empirical data highlighted specific educational trajectories, whereas the article concentrated on the media-political dimension of the broadcaster's role. The distinction rested in focus: empirical material emphasised curriculum alignment and students' everyday practices, while the publication highlighted the broadcaster's cultural policy and historical relationship with its young audience.

Cognitive load and multitasking emerged as explanatory factors for the low completion rates observed in massive open online courses. A review by Y. Zhou & L. Deng (2023) systematised trends in media multitasking in education, highlighting reduced depth of information processing and fragmented attention. The similarity across cases lay in the recognition of a trade-off between broad reach and depth of learning; the difference was that the Korean case partially mitigated these risks through social presence and collective learning ethics, whereas the general picture of multitasking remained predominantly negative for complex learning tasks. Information overload in the American context prompted the adoption of practices such as critical source evaluation and the curation of playlists. In response to these challenges, R. Afrilyasanti *et al.* (2023) proposed integrating critical media literacy into EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environments as a framework for evaluating credibility, relevance, and bias. The similarity lay in recognising the need for meta-skills in navigation; the difference concerned subject focus: the results encompassed broader domains (STEM and professional courses), whereas R. Afrilyasanti *et al.* developed a framework specifically for language education.

At the institutional level, findings from Korea and the United Kingdom emphasised the importance of organisational readiness: government agencies and the public broadcaster ensured standards, access, and integration. A systematic review by T. Gkrimpizi *et al.* (2023) classified barriers to digital transformation in higher education, ranging from technological and organisational to cultural factors. The similarity lay in the recognition that, without institutional coordination, the effects of platforms became fragmented; the difference was that the Korean experience demonstrated a mature system of recognition (CBS), whereas the review outlined the general landscape of barriers without reference to national credit recognition policies. At the micro level of interaction, the Korean findings highlighted social presence as a key factor in course completion: forums, group assignments, and a sense of belonging. Consistent with this, R. Lobo-Quintero *et al.* (2025) showed that engagement on an educational social platform depended on a combination of ease of interaction, social signals (mutual support), and content factors (task

relevance). The similarity lay in the importance of social mechanisms; the difference concerned the environment: the Korean case operated within a national MOOC infrastructure, whereas the study focused on a standalone educational social platform with its own design logic.

In summary, digital educational platforms did not act upon society externally but were embedded within national regimes of capital conversion and mechanisms of institutional recognition. This is crucial for explaining why the same technology produced different socio-cultural effects: formal integration (Korea) transformed online learning into recognised degrees; market-network logic (USA) turned knowledge into a commodity and media practice; public service (United Kingdom) functioned as a safeguard against inequality but relied on basic access infrastructure. The study's findings confirm that social mobility via educational media depended on national mechanisms of legitimacy and social engagement practices; these align with existing research on capital conversion, multitasking, information overload, inclusion, and institutional barriers.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that digital educational media platforms function not merely as tools for knowledge transmission, but as key socio-cultural institutions that shape educational values, mechanisms of mobility, and youth cultural practices. Examination of three national cases – South Korea, the USA, and the United Kingdom – confirmed that media education organically reflects existing social orientations, amplifying them within digital environments. In South Korea, the digital learning environment combined academic discipline with the value of collective interaction. Findings indicated that participation in K-MOOC fostered the formation of informal study groups, resource sharing, the strengthening of group identity, and the consolidation of collaborative educational practices. Educational achievements acquired cultural significance as they were integrated into digital profiles and daily online routines. In the USA, results showed that educational media platforms facilitated the development of individualised learning trajectories and pragmatic motivations. Coursera and YouTube were found not merely to provide learning materials, but to transform the perception of knowledge itself, linking it to self-development, professional activity, and the creation of personal educational content. Notably, YouTube emerged as a platform for networked communities centred on educational channels, where social interaction between creators and audiences supported sustained self-directed learning. The

findings confirm that mobility models in the USA were closely tied to the attention economy and the potential to convert knowledge into media products.

The study found that media education in the United Kingdom was grounded in principles of inclusion, equitable access, and cultural diversity. Findings indicated that BBC Bitesize functioned as a resource support system for broad student groups, ensuring consistent educational standards and contributing to the reduction of inequalities in access to learning materials. At the same time, the analysis revealed that the opportunities afforded by digital education were partially constrained by technical inequalities, which affected the uniformity of youth participation in online learning. A key qualitative insight was that the integration of multimedia content with offline initiatives facilitated the development of a more comprehensive educational experience. A synthesis of the three national cases demonstrated that media platforms reflected dominant societal orientations: in South Korea, the emphasis was on the value of collective activity; in the USA, on individualism and entrepreneurial drive; and in the United Kingdom, on inclusion and cultural diversity. Thus, digital education emerged as a mechanism closely intertwined with social structures, value systems, and the cultural logic of each society.

The study, however, had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the persistence of digital inequality in the United Kingdom and, to some extent, in the USA affected the accessibility of outcomes for all social groups. Secondly, the absence of long-term data on the economic impact of participation in K-MOOC prevented an assessment of final outcomes in terms of social mobility. Future research could extend the comparative analysis to additional countries and examine the long-term effects of integrating online credits into formal education systems. It would also be valuable to investigate in greater depth the social engagement mechanisms that enhance course completion, as well as to explore innovative models for overcoming digital poverty, which remains a significant barrier.

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The role of social media in shaping perceptions of social norms in a post-truth context

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Abstract. This study addresses the urgent relevance of this topic, focusing on how political and digital factors contribute to the degradation of media freedom and the spread of post-truth in the context of global polarisation. This study aimed to reveal the main mechanisms that shape the new forms of truth awareness through digital platforms, political practices, and social discourses. For the purposes of this study, a comparative analysis of legislation, as well as the practice in the implementation of the legislation, a case study of the media, and discourse analysis of political and cultural narratives were used. The study concludes that in a post-truth era, social media becomes a tool for the construction of society and an institution for the creation and legitimisation of new social norms. It is found that post-truth is not just a side effect of human cognitive functioning, but an attribute of the digital space in which technology is constantly evolving, information is being digitised (algorithmisation of contents), and social divisions are growing. It is determined that algorithms play a key role in the creation and normalisation of new social reality, serving as “architects” of reality; they select the form of behaviour and interpretation that contributes to maximum user engagement. As a result of the comparative analysis of the national models, the following findings were obtained: in the United States of America, the process of normalisation of political confrontation took place; Brazil was characterised by the consolidation of populist discourse; in India, WhatsApp became the driver of the formation of new local social norms and violent practices. Specific case studies, the #MeToo movement in the United States of America, the fight against disinformation in Brazil, and mobilisation on WhatsApp in India, show the effectiveness of online discourse in achieving social changes. Based on the practical importance of the results, the possibility of using the conclusions of the study to form a strategy for effective regulation and a system of journalistic professional ethics is substantiated, as one of the components of strengthening information resilience

Keywords: disinformation; fact-checking; algorithmic systems; polarisation; fake news

INTRODUCTION

Rapid transformations of the media landscape in a post-truth context have led to digital platforms and social networks becoming not just channels of dissemination of information but active promoting agents of new social realities. The information environment of the 21st century is typified by an increasing prevalence of manipulation, the spread of disinformation, pressure from political and private interests on journalism and a profound shift in the principles governing trust in the media. These processes manifest clearly in these two aspects of globalisation and digitalisation of information flows, which do not seem to have definite boundaries and algorithmic mechanisms employed by technology corporations, whose result is societal polarisation by providing a distorted picture of what the

social norms are. In the post-truth era, when people tend to hold on and defend what they want to believe without regard to facts, media freedom, regulation of digital platforms, and ethical responsibility of communication become more critical.

The problem under consideration has been examined in scholarly research from multiple perspectives, encompassing political, social, cultural, and technological dimensions. In their research, E. Culloty & J. Suiter (2021) came to the conclusion that media freedom worldwide is eroding under the influence of political and private pressures that include financial manipulation and the adoption of restrictive policies and direct violence against journalists. The authors noted that the fragility of the media situation

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has increased as a result of the rapid proliferation of digital platforms and the rise of authoritarian trends, which are given new forms of manipulation. It was noted that structural changes in the digital ecosystem provided conducive grounds for the manipulation of public opinion and the capture of the media space by political and commercial forces. S.A. Matei *et al.* (2021) focused on the problem of imbalance between technological giants and the public interest, identifying the case as one of increasing asymmetry of influence between private corporations and democratic institutions. The need for the introduction of new transatlantic regulatory models was underscored, which considers the principles of freedom of expression, protection of privacy, and promotion of technological innovation. In the study by D.A. Barclay (2022), attention was drawn to media-ethical dimensions of post-truth and, more specifically, to communication strategies that are able to minimise the effects of manipulation and give rise to a critical approach to information. It was argued that a central task of media lies in creating conditions for restoring trust in journalism through the implementation of ethical standards, as well as the development of transparent communication practices. D.A. Barclay also demonstrated that post-truth not only reshapes the information environment but also the very structure of social relations as it takes down the popularly accepted conceptions of objectivity and trust.

D. Malcolm (2021), drawing on Elias's sociology of knowledge, interpreted post-truth as a consequence of the intertwining of emotional and rational communication techniques, which gradually displaced classical conceptions of public discourse. It was emphasised that the informalisation of social relations led to a diminished sense of shame associated with the dissemination of falsehoods and to the legitimisation of disinformation practices. According to this analysis, post-truth is not a deviation from truth but a new knowledge that changes the structure of thought, the nature of social interaction and the norms of public communication. In the study by Y. Godler (2020), journalistic approaches to truth in post-truth conditions were in focus. It was shown that journalists used not one truth theory, but a set of different approaches, such as correspondence, coherence, and pragmatist approaches. This led to the conception of an adaptive truth that could respond to the challenges brought by the digital age, as well as restore trust in journalism. The article by E.C. Tandoc (2020) considered that the responses to the disinformation were based on the individual interests and social connections of the users. The authors demonstrated that reactions to disinformation depended on users' individual interests and social connections. This means that social network structures and personal motivations underpin a level of disinformation output, questioning, or continuing disregard for false data.

In the study by E.S. Zappalà (2021), post-truth was conceptualised as an epochal phenomenon which became, after 2016, a defining trait in the evolutionary trajectory of culture, politics, and literature. The author emphasised that post-truth has ceased to be exclusively a political

phenomenon and has acquired the status of a cultural narrative, reflected in artistic practices, collective memory, and social representations. J. Farkas & J. Schou (2020) in their research focused on the political discourses on post-truth in Western democracies. It was shown that such discourses create a new hegemony, where truth is viewed as contested and conflictual. The authors argued that the interplay between academic and non-expert narratives creates a paradoxical arrangement in the contemporary democratic setting where the importance of truth to democratic order is acknowledged, and at the same time, various distortions and manipulations are allowed.

Despite these scholarly contributions, several issues remain insufficiently explored. In particular, mechanisms through which algorithmic systems of social platforms not only disseminate disinformation but also enact the selective institutionalisation of social norms have not been adequately examined. Comparative studies of the national media environments are also lacking to manifest different configurations of social media in a post-truth framework. This study aimed to determine how social media under post-truth conditions have evolved from channels of communication to institutional agents in the construction of social reality and which mechanisms govern the formation, legitimisation and transformation of social norms. The objectives of the research included the identification of the role of algorithmic systems of social platforms in the selective amplification of certain archetypes of behaviour; a comparison of the specifics of social media impact on public perception in the USA (United States of America), Brazil, and India; and empirical cases of such translations of online narratives into tangible social normative transformations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodological foundation of the study was based on classical and contemporary theoretical approaches that help explain changes in the epistemological and normative foundations of society. The analysis of the formation of shared representations in the digital space was based on the social construction of reality perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 2023). The agenda-setting model (McCombs *et al.*, 2018) was applied to interpret processes of determining priority issues within the public discourse, while framing theory (D'Angelo, 2017) enabled the identification of the mechanisms through which the interpretation of informational events is made in the media space. For explaining the long-term impact of digital media, a cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998) was used, which is extrapolated to the study of social networks in the 21st century. Analysis of regulatory and legal documents that establish limits on the operation of social networks in various regions was another important component of the methodological framework. In the USA, the provisions under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (Brannon & Holmes, 2024) that determine platform liability for circulated content were reviewed. The European context was analysed through the Digital Services Act (European Commission, n.d.), which stipulates

algorithmic transparency and mechanisms for countering disinformation. Considered were the *The Information Technology...* (2021) in the Indian context, which offer stringent instruments for regulating the digital space. The documents' inclusion made it possible to integrate legal and institutional dimensions into one methodological framework.

Within the empirical component of the study, a case study analysis was performed, which enabled looking at the transformation of social norms in three national contexts. For the USA, the interaction between users and the platforms Twitter/X (n.d.), Reddit (n.d.), and NYT – The New York Times (n.d.) was analysed, enabling the identification of framing mechanisms, the rapid dissemination of memes, and the role of fact-checking in restoring trust. Case studies of Facebook (n.d.), WhatsApp (n.d.) and *Folha de S.Paulo* (2025) were analysed in Brazil, as well as an experiment with restrictions on sharing multimedia content, which showed the effect of technical interventions on reducing exposure to disinformation. Materials from the *Hindustan Times* (n.d.), WhatsApp (n.d.), and Twitter/X (n.d.) in the Indian context were used, as well as the London School of Economics (LSE) study *WhatsApp Vigilantes* (2025). These sources gave an illustrated mechanism on how rumours are transformed into practical action, including violence. The choice of countries and platforms was justified by the specific characteristics of their information ecosystems: the USA as a global centre of media innovation and a major social platforms' source (Twitter/X, Reddit, Facebook), combined with a strong role of mass traditional media (NYT); Brazil as an example of the Global South country where messaging applications (WhatsApp, Facebook) are the main tools of political mobilisation; and India is the country with the highest number of WhatsApp users and a specific cultural environment that allows the local norms to be transformed.

RESULTS

Theoretical foundations for the construction of social reality in a post-truth context

In the scholarly discourse of the 21st century, the concept of “post-truth” has become the cornerstone for analysing

information processes and social consciousness transformations. The term became more common following political developments in the USA and Europe in the mid-2010s and gained common usage as a description of a new era where objective facts no longer dominate the perception of the public (Ejue & Etim, 2024). Instead, the emotive colouring of information, together with appeals to individual beliefs and values, becomes decisive in determining the “truth” and “real” in a world. This phenomenon is not limited to the political realm but is present in virtually every kind of social relation, from culture, the economy, interpersonal communication, to the promulgation of social norms. A defining feature of post-truth is the shift in emphasis from verified knowledge to information that resonates with the audience's pre-existing biases. Therefore, the social networks are catalysts in this process by which truth becomes relative. Algorithmic mechanisms that make the delivery of personalised content possible reinforce the effect of so-called “information bubbles”, within which individuals are predominantly exposed to messages affirming their existing world views (Makhortykh & Wijermars, 2023). For example, according to a survey report (The Economic, 2019), more than 53% of Indians reported having encountered fake news via Facebook or WhatsApp in the 30 days preceding an election. This provides a fertile ground for circulating disinformation, manipulative narratives, and conspiracy theories that end up defining what is perceived as behavioural norms and social standards. In the scholarly literature, post-truth is described as a condition of society in which emotions and beliefs shape perceptions of reality more than rational analysis or empirical evidence (Brahms, 2022). This characteristic is directly related to the functioning of the contemporary media, as they produce information flows in which facts are intertwined with emotional imagery and accuracy is often subordinated to impact. Within a post-truth environment, journalism and propaganda are blurred, just as the dichotomy between fact and opinion, thus causing a trust crisis in the traditional media. Table 1 provides descriptions of post-truth in greater detail.

Table 1. Post-truth as a systemic characteristic of the communication environment

Category	Factors	Consequences/Manifestations
Technical factors	► mass digitalisation of information and communication technologies; ► global network connectivity (social networks, messaging applications); ► algorithmisation (filtering, personalisation, echo chambers)	► accelerated dissemination of content without adequate fact-checking; ► passive models of information consumption (preference for confirmation of existing beliefs); ► decline in the role of objective sources of truth and fact-checking
Sociocultural factors	► increasing prominence of subjectivity (emotionality, personal experience); ► individualisation (selection of communication partners and information sources); ► social fragmentation (diverse groups with differing norms and worldviews)	► erosion of a shared foundation of norms and facts; ► multiplicity of “realities” and contextualisation of truth; ► increased societal vulnerability to manipulation by elites and external actors

Source: P. Capilla (2021), L. Dorosh (2022), J. Friedman (2023)

Thus, post-truth is not an aberration or an isolated incident but a strategic variable in communication ecology, formed at the nexus of technological and sociocultural factors. This variable has changed the way people relate to information: critical analysis has given way to selective perception, with social media becoming a main outlet for the legitimisation of “truths” (where “truth” has become a constructed, contextual or subjective narrative). This transformation is not only limited to information behaviour but also has a direct impact on the basis of society – the system of social norms. In scholarly literature, social norms are conventionally defined as a system of collectively accepted expectations and rules of behaviour that ensure social integration and maintenance of social order (Andrighetto & Vriens, 2022). Social norms in classical approaches, especially the theory of T. Parsons (1990), serve a stabilising function and set the limits of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour within human relationships. However, in an era of digitalisation and globalisation of communication networks, social norms are increasingly formed within the communication environment instead of by traditional institutions of socialisation and regulation like family, education, state, or religion. In a social media context, “likes”, “shares”, and comments afford more symbolic approval or disapproval, thus making normative enforcement less significant in formulating norms compared to continuous interaction and feedback. This sets up a scenario whereby patterns of social behaviour emerge not from rational deliberation or even cultural traditions, but as a consequence of content virality and algorithmic amplification. Movements such as the United States’ #MeToo (Lee & Murdie, 2021) or campaigns against fake news in Brazil (Ozawa *et al.*, 2023) emerged in this digital space but quickly took up real roles in shifting social norms, impacting gender relations, journalistic standards, and legal practices.

The transformation of social norms within the media environment takes two interrelated forms. On the one hand, there is a redefinition of traditional understandings of morality, tolerance, legitimacy, and publicity. What is considered politically active in one culture may be judged as inactivity in another culture, depending on the representation and reception of those norms in the media environment. On the other hand, new norms appear that are specific to the digital environment – the norms of online communication, rules of conduct in networks, and perceptions about the privacy or publicity of one’s personal data. In this, algorithmic systems of social media have a decisive role. They not only organise information flows but also form a kind of selective mechanism, which determines which topics are given visibility and which are delegated to the periphery of attention. Content selection algorithms on social media platforms such as Twitter or Instagram are based on the principles of personalisation and engagement maximisation, thus creating informational environments where users are continuously exposed to content that reinforces their pre-existing beliefs. Over 99% of smartphones had WhatsApp installed on them in Brazil during the

2022 elections, and the number of unique disinformation claims that were circulated via various factchecking service lines showed a sharp rise in tandem with user increases (Hale *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, not only are the individual beliefs reinforced, but certain practices also become normalised at the level of communities. This process seems even more significant in post-truth contexts, where truth loses its explanatory power and becomes the second choice after feelings. Algorithms act as an institution of selective institutionalisation of social norms, promoting those representations that are more conducive to high audience engagement and downgrading those that have a limited number of fans. In this sense, algorithmic systems may be seen as new socialisation agents, competing with the traditional institutions. Whereas in modern society norm formation was carried out by legal systems, educational institutions, and traditional media, in the 21st century, this process is increasingly governed by the “black boxes” of digital platforms, whose *modus operandi* remains incomprehensible to ordinary users (Laczi & Póser, 2025).

In academic discussion, the media-social norm nexus is observed through several theoretical approaches, with each approach focusing on specific mechanisms regarding the formation and change of normative orientations in society. No one approach would be able to account for all facets of this phenomenon excellently, but collectively, they can be used to draw a more coherent picture given the complexity of the media environment in the post-truth era. One of the most influential approaches is the theory of the social construction of reality, formulated by P. Berger & T. Luckmann (2023). In this view, media are institutionalised means that define and assign meaning to certain real events and phenomena, thus forming a framework of interpretation for the same. Meaning negotiation, public debate, circulation of memes, and epidemiological campaigns all work together to ensure that social media serve as a key platform for the construction of realities. Another theoretical strand is represented by the “agenda-setting” model, introduced by M.E. McCombs *et al.* (2018). This model emphasises that media do not so much determine what people think, but rather shape what they think about. As far as social norms are concerned, it means that issues/media that are regularly covered in the media gain the status of socially relevant topics, while those that are beyond the sphere of media attention are marginalised.

Framing theory logically followed from E. Goffman’s original concept and later advancement in media and communication fields, and it emphasised the presentation of information (D’Angelo, 2017). Frames create a schema of reality, based on what is included and what is excluded. This forms the basis for framing theory because it chooses which practices are acceptable within society, making it a direct impact on norm formation. In the case of India, the use of WhatsApp as a channel for the dissemination of ethno-religious messages is particularly illustrative, where frames were employed to construct the legitimacy of violent actions leading to a shift in the parameters of what is deemed

acceptable in the mass psyche (Amarasingam *et al.*, 2022). The study by K. Garimella & D. Eckles (2020) showed that 13% of the photos shared in political WhatsApp groups in the pre-election period in India are false. The theory of cultivation by G. Gerbner (1998) is also important. It reveals the role of media in forming perceptions of social reality. The study highlights the cumulative effect, which is the result of systematic long-term exposure to media content. If, in traditional media, the accumulation of the effect was the result of the long viewing of television broadcasts, in the digital environment, it is the result of the constant presence of people in social networks. This gives rise to a phenomenon of “culture of constant presence”, in which repeated images and messages reinforce and normalise certain practices. For instance, various studies show that exposure to politically polarised content on Twitter (X, n.d.) in the USA fuels the perception of social division and sets new norms in terms of “normal” political behaviour, where aggressive confrontation and radical speech are regarded as legitimate.

The regulatory and normative aspects are taken into account in the context of the theoretical and methodological analysis that defines the limits of social media activity and the norm-formation process in the post-truth era. If classical sociological theories mainly focus on the symbolic and communicative aspects of the phenomenon, contemporary society of the 21st century also requires attention to the legal and institutional, as well as ethical factors. National legal systems respond differently to disinformation and algorithmic selection problems. In the USA, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (Brannon & Holmes, 2024) ensures broad immunity from the platform and minimises liability for user-generated content, while in the European Union, the Digital Services Act (European Commission, n.d.) introduces regulations on algorithmic transparency and regulation of disinformation. In India, The Information Technology... (2021), adopted in 2021, introduce stricter procedures for blocking objectionable content, raising the issue of balancing security and freedom of speech. In addition to the legal level, the level of ethics is also relevant when platforms and journalistic communities create their own rules to prevent the dissemination of fake news, hate speech, and the manipulation of narratives. Socially, one of the most powerful instruments is user-driven self-regulation practices, including large-scale unfollowings and “cancel culture”, as well as coordinated actions through mass reporting, which work as a form of digital punishment and, at the same time, show the emergence of new norms established not by the state, but by communities.

One relevant approach is symbolic interactionism, within which social norms are viewed as the product of ongoing interpretation of meanings in interpersonal communication (Husin *et al.*, 2021). Social media greatly expands the field for such communication, where the person is simultaneously producer and consumer of content. In this sense, norms are not only inherently top-down but also enforced horizontally, through interactions between relatively equal participants. In this regard, there is the spreading

of hashtags as new forms of normative expression, where their extensive and common use denotes social recognition of a particular stance, which thus becomes a social standard. Critical media theory is also widely used in research (Fuchs, 2021). The media function as instruments for the reproduction of power relations and hegemony. For this reason, critical theory is applied in the post-truth era with a new approach when algorithmic systems are viewed as producing inequalities as much as reflecting them and determining which voices are heard and which are not within social networks. That is to say, media not only provide information but also regulate the normative aspects selectively in favour of the groups which have greater access to resources of influence.

The combination of these approaches makes it possible to recognise that the relationship between media and social norms is multidimensional. These include a symbolic interaction process between individuals, structural agenda-setting and framing, as well as systemic long-term effects and reproduction of power relations. This is especially significant given that these processes are situated in a digital context where algorithms serve as a highly impactful but supplementary mediator. It therefore creates a relativity and a dynamic and situational nature of the norms, making society more prone to change but also more manipulable.

Influence of social media on the USA, Brazil and India in a post-truth situation

The media environment in each of the countries has its own empirical profile, which defines how these platforms influence social norms and the extent of this impact. The USA has more public (open) platforms (a high share of social dialogue is in Twitter/X (n.d.) and Reddit (n.d.)), while traditional large media, for example, The New York Times (n.d.), are one of the important nodes for correcting false information and norms. It is thus the mix of expert information (professional media and research reports) and social mobilisation via digital networks (viral stories and memes) that has the biggest impact on how social norms are changing. In Brazil, one can observe an affinity for private messaging services and social networks and the influence they have on local mobilisation and political communication. At the same time, massive national newspapers like *Folha de S.Paulo* (2025) tend to function in tense interactions with digital platforms, accusing the latter of cultivating informational garbage. This creates an environment where norms with regard to political behaviour, trust in institutions, and information hygiene are re-established through the circulation of content within private networks and by selection by algorithms. In India, the role of closed communication channels (WhatsApp) coupled with the level of mobile penetration creates a higher-level vulnerability for the spread of rumours/disinformation that is accelerated to the point that it, in some cases, leads to violent practices and changes local social norms. Table 2 presents the key empirical indicators and mechanisms of influence for the selected media platforms in the respective countries.

Table 2. Key empirical indicators for the main platforms and the channels of their influence

Parameter/ Country and platforms	USA – The New York Times, Reddit, Twitter/X	Brazil – Folha de S.Paulo, Facebook, WhatsApp	India – Hindustan Times, WhatsApp, Twitter/X
Structural characteristics of the media environment	Hybrid System of Large-Scale Public Platforms and Influential Traditional Media; NYT represents a case of an elite media actor with the capacity for fact-checking and providing normative guidance; Reddit comprises thematic communities characterised by a high degree of self-organisation of norms; Twitter serves as a fast-paced discursive space with significant potential for the viral propagation of threads	A combination of mass social networks (Facebook/Instagram) and private messaging channels (WhatsApp); national newspapers (Folha) have much power over elites, but limited oversight capacities over private groups; algorithms on Facebook/Instagram are a major factor in the visibility of local stories	There is dominance of mobile messaging platforms (WhatsApp) in information exchange during everyday life; Hindustan Times functions as a traditional media actor with an online presence; Twitter is used mainly by political elites and activists, and there are frequent regional variations concerning language and content
Main mechanisms of norm transmission	Public framing by elite media (NYT) + rapid social propagation of memes and threads (Twitter) + normative oversight and moderation within the subreddits; fact-checking serves as a mechanism to restore normative order	Content circulation through targeting and private networks; multimedia “facts” on WhatsApp and Facebook spread easily in a viral manner; algorithmic selection amplifies local narratives and emotionally charged messages	Transmission of rumours and local narratives within encrypted WhatsApp groups; political discussion on Twitter is sometimes translated into local offline activity; linguistic diversity further exacerbates local recirculation of norms
Representative empirical cases/ events	The influence of Twitter/X narratives on public opinion regarding vaccination; studies indicate an effect of descriptive online norms on attitude change, including impacts on vaccine uptake	An experimental deactivation of the multimedia content on WhatsApp in Brazil (RCT – Randomised Controlled Trial) resulted in a reduced exposure to disinformation prior to elections; media press (Folha) and academic reviews had proved the role played by Facebook in the spread of disinformation during electoral campaigns	Research and analytical reports have repeatedly pointed to a link between the circulation of WhatsApp messages and local incidences of violence and mobilisation; the LSE study “WhatsApp Vigilantes” and various journalistic reports have documented the mechanisms at work in translating rumours into action
Nature of disinformation/ misinformation influencing norms	Politically oriented disinformation (elections, pandemic), manipulative visual content, and constructed narratives designed for emotional mobilisation; Reddit occasionally functions as a source of atypical norms emerging from subcultures	Mass circulation of fabricated images and videos, as well as manipulative messages within private groups; political polarisation increases users’ willingness to accept authoritative yet unreliable information	Locally adapted fake content (including multilingual versions of the content), fabricated announcements, and manipulated news screenshots, all of which affect norms relating to safety and behaviour-change response
Algorithmic features affecting norm formation	Personalisation of the “For You” feed and timelines, engagement-based optimisation, and relevance-based ranking work to reinforce homogenous clusters of belief and amplify normative patterns that produce user engagement	Facebook/Instagram algorithms amplify sensational local content; private groups and WhatsApp bypass public algorithmic filtering, creating autonomous informational micro-systems	For WhatsApp, there is no centralised feed-ranking system, but the forwarding mechanism enables exponential dissemination of information, given that sharing takes place on groups; for Twitter, there are different mechanisms that determine visibility, such as reposts and retweets
Measurement of impact on social norms	Changes in tonal framing and descriptive norms (text mining), levels of polarisation (network modularity), and attitude analysis based on representative surveys	Measured indicators include exposure to disinformation (RCT), frequency of content forwarding, and dynamics of political narratives on social networks	The LSE studies have identified mechanisms linking message circulation to local mobilisation
Political and institutional context and regulation	Active role of fact-checking and ongoing legal debates on platform moderation; legislative initiatives in the USA are more frequently focused on algorithmic transparency and platform accountability	Emerging moderation policies and legal proceedings involving platforms; political pressure on Facebook during electoral periods; weaker institutional capacity to regulate private communication channels	Attempts to regulate WhatsApp and other platforms, including court cases and policy initiatives aimed at combating disinformation; challenges persist due to end-to-end encryption and the scale of these platforms

Source: compiled by the author based on Facebook (n.d.), WhatsApp (n.d.), Reddit (n.d.), Twitter/X (n.d.), The New York Times (n.d.), Hindustan Times (n.d.), D. Phillips (2018), S. Gao *et al.* (2022), T. Ventura *et al.* (2023), Folha de S.Paulo (2025), WhatsApp Vigilantes (2025)

Current results suggest that while the drivers of social media's impact on social norms across the three countries have some overlapping elements, the result depends on the specific mix of social media consumption, the language(s) being used, the importance of the private networks, and how the different countries view traditional institutions. In each case, the algorithms and platforms themselves (via engagement maximisation and content distribution) provide the push for norm formation: by boosting the spread of messages that are more emotionally arousing, they increase the likelihood of certain norms becoming salient, and thus acceptable, to the population. Private and encrypted networks (WhatsApp in Brazil and India, in particular) shift norm diffusion away from institutional processes of norm correction (such as professional fact-checking and editorial oversight). Experiments and field interventions suggest that certain technical changes to platforms (disabling autoplay of video messages, limiting the spread of forwardable messages) can reduce people's exposure to misinformation, and may also slow down the social norm diffusion of socially nonnormative behaviours. A RCT in Brazil shows the real-life impact of interventions like these, and this has implications for regulatory policy (Ventura *et al.*, 2023).

The relationship between public discourse (high-trust mass media such as NYT or Folha) and networked discourse determines how quickly and how radically social norms can change. Where trust in the traditional press remains high, and fact-checking is well established, there is evidence of a more gradual and adaptive change in social norms. But where public discourse has declined, or is spread thinly over many conflicting sources of information, there are conditions ripe for rapid norm change and an associated possibility of norm radicalisation. This implies, in practical terms, elite media in the USA play a moderating role, which is, however, not always effective, whereas the private networks more often decide the "tempo" of change in Brazil and India. In terms of measurement, a number of operational dimensions should be distinguished: effects on descriptive norms (what people perceive as typical), effects on injunctive or prescriptive norms (what people perceive as acceptable), and behavioural changes (concrete actions such as participation in protests, content sharing, or violence). Effects on descriptive norms may be rapid and measurable in a matter of days or weeks (e.g. regarding information on vaccination). On the other hand, evidence from RCTs and field interventions shows that while technical measures may lead to a decline in exposure to misinformation, they do not always translate to a visibly improved long-term critical evaluation of the sources of information (Gao *et al.*, 2022).

The potential of information diffusion of digital networks is explained primarily with reference to the structure of connections and the properties of flows in the social graph. Network homophily (the tendency of individuals to associate with similar others), clustering and the disproportionate distribution of connectivity (hub nodes) present a structural precondition for widespread content. If a

message reaches a node with more people or stays within a severely connected group of like-minded individuals, there is a statistically advanced likelihood that the message will go viral rapidly. This network-based mechanism is not autonomous: it is superimposed by the affordances of platform interfaces, such as "repost" and "forward", functions of automatic media playback, and push notifications that drastically diminish the cognitive barriers to dissemination (one click is enough to repost or forward content to a group). As a result, this "low-friction" mechanism transforms any emotionally charged message into a potential driver of behavioural normalisation within a group: when content is repeatedly encountered within the same community, it begins to be perceived as a "typical" descriptive norm, and thus as politically or morally acceptable.

Three processes on this network and functional substrate jointly define the effectiveness of disinformation campaigns. The first is the emotional construction of messages, whereby content that appeals to fear, outrage, or pride shows demonstrably higher levels of engagement, as well as wide dissemination. Second, is the use of hybrid narratives (a mix of true and false): campaigns that use manipulative claims together with actual information gain more legitimacy, and therefore evade factchecking treatments. The third mechanism is instrumental organisation through coordinated networks (bots, networks of fake accounts, and "troll farms"), which amplify the initial signal by producing an illusion of mass support or wide approval of a given behaviour. Together, these processes make disinformation not only fixed but also potentially normative.

Empirical cases provide examples of the mechanisms in relation to political and socio-cultural contexts. In the USA, after the 2016 and 2022 elections, false news was circulated on social media, and its distribution was asymmetrical – the bulk of false news widely shared during that period was pro-Trump in orientation. At the same time, analyses indicate that though the overall exposure to "fake news" was significant, a very high level of persuasion effect would have been required to change the electoral outcome in a significant way (which is highly statistically unlikely). This is the empirical interpretation that disinformation in mass media serves to degrade the quality of public discourse, increase polarisation, and cause behavioural shifts only if exposure to disinformation reaches a significant mass, and is further enabled by legitimisation such as endorsement by elites. Platforms were also involved in cross-platform transmission of the "Stop the Steal" narrative and other associated messaging that helped mobilise those who stormed the Capitol on 6 January 2021. Cross-platform flows of disinformation are shown to have reinforced the mobilisation effect (Kennedy *et al.*, 2022).

In Brazil, mechanisms of private dissemination of disinformation through messaging services had a pronounced political impact during the 2018 presidential election and subsequent campaigns (Cavalini *et al.*, 2023). A distinctive feature of the Brazilian case is the large-scale use of WhatsApp as a channel for targeted chain dissemination

(forwarding) of political content, often in the form of memes, short videos, and audio messages that are difficult to subject to public moderation. Randomised field experiments and interventions (among them was the disabling of automatic media playback in the messaging application) demonstrated that technical modifications of the interface meta-reduce the exposure of an audience to certain types of disinformation, at the same time not reducing belief in such content and political polarisation in the long run. Such findings underscore that tools targeted at curtailing visibility and shreabiity are better suited to dampen informational “noise” and volumes of circulation as opposed to immediately correcting beliefs.

In India, information within encrypted messaging groups has proved localised in context, adapted linguistically, and translated rapidly into concrete action. This has been observed to have manifested in direct street mobilisation and incidents of intentional violence (Vijaywargiya, 2025). This combination of local vulnerability (access to high quality journalism being limited in some regions and marked social tensions), technological affordances (forwarding functions and large group chats), and political provocation creates conditions in which disinformation quickly shifts from being a “message” to becoming a “normative practice” – acts of violence start to be seen as legitimate responses to the purported “threat” constructed by the disinformation (Ardia *et al.*, 2020). In Brazil, during the 2018 presidential campaign, about 42% of information uttered in right-wing WhatsApp groups was adjudged to be false by fact-checkers, compared to less than 3% of similar left-wing posts (Avelar, 2019).

It is also important to emphasise differences between platforms in terms of their algorithmic design and social affordances, as these differences help explain why the same disinformation strategy produced different outcomes in the USA, Brazil, and India. Public feeds with open addressing (Twitter, Reddit) are conducive to the rapid formation of meme-based discourse and highly dependent on the visibility of influential nodes, with disinformation circulating publicly and rapidly exposed to fact-checking, but also associated with mobilisation. Platforms with algorithmic feed personalisation (Facebook, Instagram) allow for more fine-tuned targeting of the audience and, by virtue of personalisation, allow content to be normalised for a region or group. The messaging application (WhatsApp) is characterised by the lack of a public feed and by end-to-end encryption, which renders any centralised form of moderation impossible. At the same time, the forwarding options and group chats ensure localised multi-channel dissemination with messages likely to be turned into practical instructions. This classification of platforms matches empirical cases – public campaigns at large in the USA created a perception of mass support; in Brazil, political posts were verified in private WhatsApp groups; and in India, localised misinformation in messaging apps was often materialised into specific real actions.

The phenomenon of user responses to posted content in a post-truth reality is one of the core components in social norm transformation. It is the audience itself that, through discussion, polarisation and the overall acceptance/rejection of a particular interpretation, forms an environment in which established reference frameworks lose stability and new ones slowly gain social recognition. User responses are never passive but are actively modulated by the operation of algorithms that amplify particular kinds of conduct. This results in a dynamic system of mutually-reinforcing user practices and technical mechanisms that give rise to a new normativity. In the USA, this is most clearly seen in two interrelated processes – polarisation and the normalisation of radical discourses, with ideologically homogeneous communities being formed on platforms such as Reddit and Twitter, where discussion is less a matter of an exchange of arguments and more a form of identity affirmation. During electoral campaigns, even traditional media such as The New York Times were drawn into a constant cyclical response to the mass digital debates. Thus, a new norm is created, where confrontation is the norm, and the absence of compromise is not considered a flaw but evidence of principled conviction.

In Brazil, a defining characteristic is the combination of the mobilisation potential of social networks with a high level of emotional engagement among users. Facebook and Instagram amplify the circulation of videos and visual narratives that tap into collective emotions – from fear of corruption to pride in national identity. In such conditions, discussion is less oriented towards truth and more oriented towards the creation of emotionally charged “new norms”, such as “the honest citizen versus the corrupt elite”. A specific feature of the Brazilian media space is that even traditional media such as Folha de S.Paulo has to tailor its narratives according to the logic of social media, thus exacerbating the polarisation impact. In India, a critical factor is the role of mobile platforms, most notably WhatsApp, which has turned into the main avenue for information exchange. User sentiments are not only shaped in the public domain but also within closed groups where the flow of information acquires a rather intimate treatment. This is a reason for trusting messages when they arrive as well, even when they are disinformation. Thus, new norms evolve, which are specific local perceptions and ethno-religious polarisation. Twitter is used as an open forum where positions are articulated, and the bulk of narratives is spread on WhatsApp due to minimal control from algorithms. Table 3 below shows the difference in social media role on norm formation between the USA, Brazil and India. This table shows that the emergence of a social norm through social media in the post-truth era is a complex phenomenon that depends on national media system characteristics, cultural context, and the operation of algorithms. The result of this process in the USA is the consolidation of new norms of acceptable conflict in politics as a style of public behaviour. In Brazil, this process occurs through affective appeals and

forms norms of collective emotions as a foundation of political actions. In India, there is an overlap but marked distinction in the form of decentralised interpretation of “national norm” with multiple locational understandings

reinforcing social segmentation. Concluding the analysis to confirm that social media does not just relay but actively produces normativity, with the process taking varying shapes based on politico-cultural specifics.

Table 3. Comparative overview of the influence of social media on norm formation in the United States, Brazil, and India

Country	Key platforms	Role of algorithms	Nature of user response	Formation of “new norms”
USA	The New York Times, Reddit, Twitter	Reinforce polarisation; personalise political content	Discussions take the form of ideological validation; a high level of confrontation	Radicalisation of political discourse; normalisation of conflict
Brazil	Folha de S.Paulo, Facebook, Instagram	Amplify emotional content; focus on visual narratives	Mass emotional mobilisation; discussions aimed at reinforcing collective sentiments	Emergence of norms of “honesty versus corruption”; legitimisation of populism
India	Hindustan Times, WhatsApp, Twitter	Minimal algorithmic control on WhatsApp; selective amplification on Twitter	Responses within closed groups; high trust in information; reinforcement of ethno-religious divisions	Localised norms reinforcing social segmentation; legitimisation of exclusive identities

Source: compiled by the author based on Facebook (n.d.), WhatsApp (n.d.), Reddit (n.d.), Twitter/X (n.d.), The New York Times (n.d.), Hindustan Times (n.d.), E.R.L. Loureiro (2021), D. Kreiss & S.C. McGregor (2024), R. Vijaywargiya (2025), Folha de S.Paulo (2025)

To overcome the norm-producing spread of disinformation, it is necessary to use a combination of approaches. Network analysis makes it possible to identify critical nodes and pathways of dissemination; a content and sentiment analysis detects alignments of emotionality and framing; experimental interventions (RCTs, field experiments) assess the impact of technical interventions; and the political economy of platforms clarifies which structuralised incentives/platform policies aid or retard correction. For operational conclusions, combined metrics should be employed, including speed of dissemination (time-to-peak), forwarding rates, network modularity/assortativity, changes in descriptive norms in pre- and post-exposure surveys, and case-based realisations (transitions from information to concrete action). In practical terms, the findings suggest several specific policy directions. Technical restrictions on content sharing within messaging applications and user interface (UI) modifications (such as indicators of media provenance or throttling the forwarding functionality) may help reduce the chances of super-viral large-scale dissemination of disinformation. On the other hand, there is a need for broadening holistic media literacy programmes, more localised fact-checking initiatives with multilingual capacities, and transparent research mechanisms (including access to anonymised platform data) for timely detection of emerging disinformation manoeuvres. That moderation policies need to be context-sensitive – an intervention that would work in open-feed contexts in the USA would not be as effective in the context of large encrypted communication channels as in Brazil or India.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that algorithmic systems functioned as architects of reality, lending social norms a dynamic, situational and relative character. The discussion of the research findings enabled a comparison of the conclusions drawn with existing approaches in the field. F. Fischer’s (2021)

analysis has shown that the phenomenon of post-truth has been interpreted not only as an epistemological crisis but also as a political one, where the struggle over the meaning and the interpretation of facts becomes a key mechanism. The study emphasised that cases such as climate change denial and COVID-19 denial showed a shift from striving for social truth to competing for the social significance of facts. In conducted research, this was observed in the USA, Brazil, and India as well, where norms were formed not by people trusting in facts, but through the constant repetition of some views and algorithms amplifying some emotional aspects of events. As such, these findings confirm the concept of post-truth as a multilayered and multi-faceted phenomenon, showing also the increasing role of digital tools in this process, as technical actors of the meaning-making process beyond F. Fischer’s conception.

According to the study conducted by R. Cazzamatta *et al.* (2024), even though fact-checking has become an institutional mechanism, it is still heterogeneous and subject to political and regional factors. The researchers found that the global network of 400+ organisations has created a divide between powerful media centres and local initiatives that makes combating disinformation very hard. In comparison with these findings, the present study indicates that fact-checking in the USA has a relatively stable institutional character, whereas in Brazil and India, a more localised and reactive form prevails, closely linked to the dynamics of social media and political campaigning. Notably, cases of disinformation spreading via WhatsApp in Brazil and India, where localised initiatives are insufficiently resourced to respond to large-scale waves of false information. Thus, the results not only confirm the conclusion made in relation to regional heterogeneity but also complement it with evidence regarding the role of algorithmic systems that frame dissemination trajectories following information pathways leading to relative inefficiency of fact-checking in media ecosystems. In the study by

L. Sihombing *et al.* (2024), post-truth was conceptualised as the contrast between the irrational essence of post-truth and the rational roots of the legal truth. The author highlighted the danger to democratic institutions and the need for identification of philosophical and legal bases that can help reinstate trust among societies. Comparing those propositions to the findings of the present study revealed that regulatory frameworks still play a significant role in maintaining informational order in the USA, Brazil, and India, but the success of legal mechanisms was largely dependent on the algorithmic environment and the context of user reactions. The results showed that legal regulation cannot always limit the process of the formation of “new norms” on social media, which are shaped in the context of mass discussions and social polarisation. In other words, thus, in the irrational post-truth and rational truth binary, the determining factor was not normative frameworks so much as technological and communicative mechanisms that dictated the pace and direction of social transformation.

In the research by L. Reyes-Galindo (2021), it was argued that the phenomenon of post-truth is not restricted to the Brexit crisis, the United States’ presidential elections or other similar events, but its origins are deeply embedded in the social and cultural history. This study showed that scientific controversies are often artificially constructed as a result of socio-cultural practices, and that neglect of knowledge is either the outcome of deliberate policy or the by-product of institutional processes. In the present study, this conclusion was both confirmed and further specified through the example of the Brazilian media environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, where the combination of algorithmic information selection and the emotional mobilisation of users facilitated the legitimisation of populist narratives and undermined trust in official sources. In comparison with L. Reyes-Galindo’s interpretation, the findings demonstrated that post-truth is not only a culturally conditioned process but also a technologically sustained environment in which algorithms act as a key factor determining the scale and speed of the construction of non-knowledge. In the study by A.Y. Lee (2022), the main emphasis was placed on media literacy as a critical condition for countering disinformation. The author defined media literacy as a key instrument that enables recognition of manipulation, critical evaluation of information and reduction of vulnerability to fake news. The results of this research supported this thesis, but also demonstrated that even a high level of personal media competence does not guarantee protection from algorithmic effects. Thus, in the USA, where media literacy is at a higher level because of the traditions of media education and the public discourse, algorithmic selection also affects the radicalisation of political debate and conflict escalation. This means that media literacy is necessary but not sufficient to combat post-truth in the absence of technological and social mechanisms of selective norm institutionalisation.

A.A. Sabancı (2022) proposed the notion of “post-truth journalism” as the identification of outlets that claim to be

traditional, while they disseminate disinformation. The example of Breitbart demonstrates how hybrid media erode confidence in factual reporting and use journalistic formats to legitimise the use of manipulative materials. In the current study, it was found that similar processes operate in the case of the USA, where traditional and digital media coexisted and were politically contested, with normalisation even in respectable outlets; Brazil, where private messaging allowed users to circulate disinformation without journalistic control; and India, where WhatsApp channels sent out news-like messages as a means of mass mobilisation and even in some instances violent actions. Comparing it with the conceptualisations of A.A. Sabancı, it should be noted that post-truth journalism is only a subset of the general process in which algorithms and user engagement determine the formation of new norms. K. Özcan (2023) centred on an analysis of mechanisms of disinformation spread and their effect on the political process. The author stressed the role of algorithms as a tool to organise the flow of information and to produce new forms of public opinion manipulation. In comparison with the findings of current study, the algorithmic structure determined the social interaction framework and the processes of selective norm institutionalisation. K. Özcan analysed the political process and its effect on public opinion in the political context of elections primarily. In presented research, the results demonstrated the wider scope, ranging from political radicalisation in the USA to social segregation in local contexts in India. Thus, the results showed that algorithms produced consequences not only in politics but also in the cultural and normative field. It implies an extension of political scope in the narrow sense.

G. Singh (2023) presented post-truth as a situation where the truth that appears true prevails, especially in relation to political statements and the most global events that occurred in 2016, such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. The author addressed post-truth as a factor affecting the sphere of international relations and security policy, based on realist and liberal approaches. Comparing it with the findings of this study, G. Singh analysed post-truth primarily as a political and international issue, while this study focused on the socio-cultural level of post-truth. The importance of algorithms was emphasised, which led to the establishment of new norms and increased social polarisation. G. Singh stressed the broadening of the concept of security under post-truth conditions, and the results of this study showed that platforms are instruments that directly strengthen new forms of normativity, not just security. A.S. Kuraishi (2022) considered post-truth as a political discourse, as such, that is, distinguished it from the classic concept of post-truth (dominance of feelings, fake news). According to the author, post-truth discourse is a factor in political polarisation, degradation of democratic institutions, and democratic deconsolidation. The theoretical construction proposed by the author made it possible to define post-truth as a purposeful tool of a political actor. A comparison with the present study indicates that the findings are complementary: while A.S. Kuraishi sustained

attention to the discursive dimension of post-truth and its impact on democratic institutions in developing countries, the present research identified concrete empirical mechanisms of such influence via algorithmisation of digital platforms to amplify polarisation in localisation of norms. In both cases, it was demonstrated that post-truth is not confined to the informational sphere but transforms the very structure of political and social relations.

To sum up, comparing the findings of this study with the previous ones shows variation in perception of the phenomenon and its effects. The conducted study brought these results together by showing that post-truth not only serves communication channels but has an impact on democratic processes; on the other hand, it also functions as an institutional agent involved in the formation of social norms. This leads to the conclusion that information space, in its post-truth configuration, constitutes a multidimensional environment wherein mechanisms of political nature, of social nature, and cultural nature converge, whose waves range from intensified polarisation to increased transformation of models of democratic governance.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on a conducted analysis, social media in the post-truth environment is transforming from a channel of communication to an institutional agent of the construction of social reality, directly affecting the processes of formation, legitimisation, and transformation of social norms. It was shown that the phenomenon of post-truth, marked by a return from objective facts to beliefs subscribed to in an emotionally consequential manner, is not simply an epistemological aberration, but a systemic attribute of the media space, brought about by the technological digitalisation, the algorithmisation of content, and the socio-cultural processes of individualisation and fragmentation of society. The study also identified a mechanism through which algorithmic systems of social platforms, as “non-corporate agents of socialisation”, implement selective institutionalisation of norms. They institutionalise and amplify certain behaviour and representations that produce maximum user engagement, thus making social norms more relativistic, situational and changeable. National media environments of the USA, Brazil, and India have been compared, revealing distinct configurations of such influence. In the USA, with dominant public platforms and more traditional media, there a normalisation of political conflict and

radicalisation of discourse. In Brazil, which is typified by hybrid private and mass social platforms, emotional mobilisation and legitimisation of populist narratives prevailed. In India, on the other hand, the preponderance of enclosed channels of mobile communication was found to have led to the development of highly localised norms which accentuate segregative social practices and, at times, engage in actual violence.

The theoretical and methodological analysis, which combined approaches from the social construction of reality, agenda-setting theory, framing theory, cultivation theory, and symbolic interactionism, confirmed a multi-dimensional relationship between media and norms. As such, the media/ norm relationship is one of symbolic interaction, as well as structural mechanisms of power reproduction. The analysis of individual case studies, such as the #MeToo movement in the USA, Brazilian anti-fake news, and the WhatsApp-driven mass mobilisation in India, has shown that social media translates digital discourse into actual changes in norms. Thus, it can be concluded that in post-truth environments, social media not only reflect, but also produce normativity. They make society more open to change, but also more vulnerable to manipulation and coercion, thus necessitating a broad range of countervailing responses, involving technical solutions, flexible regulatory systems tailored to particular social contexts, and campaigns to raise digital and media literacy. The study only analyses the media environments of three countries (the USA, Brazil, and India) and selected social platforms, which makes it difficult to fully generalise the conclusions to all media environments and regions. Further empirical research should focus on cross-country comparative studies using media environments with different political systems, as well as the development of more precise quantitative approaches to measuring the direct links between specific algorithms and changes in social media and corresponding changes in specific norms.

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The media and the role of new subcultures in the digital revolution – the influence of podcasts on youth movements and collective ideas

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Abstract. The study aimed to identify the channels and means through which podcasts influence the formation of youth subcultures, social movements, and collective meanings in the digital media environment. The study was based on comparative analysis, conceptual analysis of scholarly literature, functional analysis, and case analysis of podcast projects. It was established that podcasts occupy an intermediate position between traditional media and social platforms. According to recent data, 83% of young people aged 16-24 are regular podcast listeners, while 73% of the America population aged 12+ have consumed podcasts at least once. The regularity of audio content consumption and personalised recommendation mechanisms contribute to the emergence of stable digital communities. Political podcasts have transformed into an environment for civic mobilisation: Pod Save America mobilised hundreds of thousands of volunteer actions during the 2020-2024 election campaigns. The political podcast The Rest Is Politics gathered 15,000-20,000 spectators at a live event in London, demonstrating the transition of audio content into offline communities. Environmentally oriented podcasts combine educational functions with climate activism; educational podcasts perform informal civic socialisation. The functions of podcasts in the youth environment are identified, each accompanied by both positive outcomes and potential risks. Podcasts have become an independent socio-cultural space within which new models of collective identity, digital solidarity, and civic activity of young people are being formed. The influence was determined not only by content but also by the combination of parasocial interaction, algorithmic personalisation, and network self-organisation, creating prerequisites for new subcultural formations in the digital age. The results can be used by media communications and civic education specialists to develop interaction strategies with youth communities

Keywords: algorithmic personalisation; civic participation; feedback; parasocial relationships; political mobilisation; worldview orientation

INTRODUCTION

During the 2010s-2020s, the digital revolution transformed information production and consumption. Social platforms, streaming services, and digital technologies enabled young people to shape their values, behavioural patterns, and collective identities outside traditional institutions. Podcasts emerged as a dynamic segment of the digital media environment, combining personalised communication, long-form narrative, and stable audience communities. Unlike short social media formats, podcasts allow in-depth discussion of politics, civic participation, social justice, environmental activism, and cultural identity. Consequently, podcasting has transformed from a media tool into a space for constructing new subcultures with shared narratives, symbolic codes, and models of social

interaction. Thus, studying the role of podcasts in forming youth movements and collective ideas is relevant, as young people are active participants in digital communication and agents of cultural transformation.

A contribution to understanding the mechanisms of podcast influence on audiences was made by K.T. Yorganci & L. McMurtry (2024). The researcher established that the perception of host authenticity is formed through a set of characteristics, among which immediacy, spontaneity, similarity to the audience, and the demonstration of one's own imperfections are significant. The obtained results showed that it was precisely these features that contributed to the emergence of parasocial relationships that go beyond ordinary media consumption and affect listeners' beliefs,

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behavioural attitudes, and consumer practices. The issue of podcasting as a tool of digital activism was explored by Z. Zokaei (2024). The researcher demonstrated that podcasts can perform a broader function than disseminating information or presenting alternative views. Using the Price of Secrecy project as an example, it was shown that audio communication can create a space for reflecting on social traumas and the experiences of marginalised groups. The educational potential of podcasts was highlighted by U.Y. Aulia & L. Oktaviani (2024). The authors concluded that the use of podcasts in the educational environment contributed to increasing the level of civic engagement among university students. The research results demonstrated the development of critical thinking, the ability to reflect, and a readiness to discuss social issues. At the same time, it was established that podcasts allow overcoming the limitations of traditional educational practices due to their interactivity and greater proximity to the everyday information environment of young people.

A line of research examined digital youth movements and climate activism. J. Aiello & E. Di Martino (2024) found that podcasts effectively form collective identity within youth environmental communities. An analysis of Generation Climate Europe showed that digital communications disseminate environmental information and create a sense of belonging to a transnational movement, combining expertise, mobilisation potential, and shared values. R. Barbarino *et al.* (2022) explored podcasting's social integration potential, finding that collaborative podcast creation strengthens intercultural dialogue and involves diverse social groups in local community discussions. Podcasts thus empower communication participants and create new forms of civic participation. The digital storytelling environment facilitates the inclusion of traditionally underrepresented voices in public discourse. Podcasts as an environment for forming collective identities were analysed by J. Donison (2023), who showed that podcast platforms enable complex, multidimensional models of group belonging, creating public spaces where community members offer different interpretations of their social experience. This allows podcasts to overcome simplified identity representation and support intragroup diversity. Similar tendencies were identified by A. Wilbur *et al.* (2022), who examined podcasts as a tool for building solidarity around migration. The audio format enables co-production of meanings and public pedagogy, allowing participants to tell their stories while forming mutual understanding and social support. The problem of collective action in the digital environment was investigated by T. Moldovan *et al.* (2025). Through analysis of Black Lives Matter discussions, they established that podcasts articulate calls to action, form participation intentions, and discuss civic outcomes. Collective action in podcasts is accompanied by specific emotional patterns where positive forms of mobilisation dominate alongside protest sentiments, positioning podcasting as a separate channel for supporting and reproducing civic activity.

Despite the body of research, the understanding of the role of podcasts as an environment for the formation of new youth subcultures, within which the mechanisms of collective identification, digital activism, civic participation, and the dissemination of shared socio-cultural narratives are combined, remains insufficiently systematised. The aim of the study was to determine the role of podcasts in the formation of new youth subcultures, movements, and collective ideas in the context of the digital revolution. To achieve this aim, the study intended to investigate the transformation of podcasts from a digital content format into an environment for the formation of subcultural communities; to characterise the mechanisms of podcast influence on the construction of collective identity, civic activity, and youth movements; and to identify the socio-cultural opportunities and risks associated with the spread of podcast communities in the digital environment.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is defined as qualitative and interdisciplinary, employing comparative, content-analytical, and case-oriented approaches, aimed at identifying the specificities of podcast functioning as an environment for the formation of youth subcultures in the digital era. The chronological boundaries of the study covered the period from 2020 to May 2025, which is determined by the period of the most intensive growth of podcast audiences, the development of platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube Podcasts, TikTok, as well as the emergence of new forms of youth online communities functioning around audio content. The theoretical and methodological foundation of the study comprised the concepts of digital subcultures and network communities (Oksanen *et al.*, 2024), parasocial interaction (Bottomley, 2024; Scherer & Cohen, 2025), algorithmic content personalisation (Liu *et al.*, 2025), and mediated formation of collective identity (Tripathi, 2024). To characterise the transformation of youth media consumption, data from the Reuters Institute presented in the Digital News Report 2024 (Newman *et al.*, 2024) were used, as well as statistical materials from Ofcom (2024) regarding changes in the media consumption structure of young users in Great Britain. These sources were selected due to their regularity, international coverage, and specialisation in monitoring digital media practices. Their use made it possible to trace the dynamics of the youth audience's transition from traditional media to digital platforms and to determine the place of podcasts in the structure of information consumption. To analyse the scale of podcasting penetration, statistical materials from Edison Research (2025a; 2025b) were used, in particular The Infinite Dial and The Gen Z Audio Report. Additionally, data from Spotify (2025) regarding the audio content consumption of Generation Z were used. At the stage of processing statistical materials, the method of secondary data analysis was applied, which made it possible to summarise the results of previous research and identify trends in the development of the podcast market without conducting one's own large-scale survey.

During the development of a comparative characteristic of traditional media, social networks, and podcasts, the method of structural-comparative analysis was used. The comparison was carried out according to the following criteria: type of communication, content control mechanism, average duration of contact with a message, level of audience engagement, features of group identity formation, mechanisms of influence on young people, potential for subculture formation, features of youth consumption, and typical outcomes for the subcultural environment. The material basis for this comparison was data from Edison Research (2023), K.T. Yorganci & L. McMurtry (2024), H. Scherer & E.L. Cohen (2025), B. Litterer *et al.* (2025), N. Newman *et al.* (2024). The application of these criteria made it possible to assess not the individual technical characteristics of media but their potential for creating stable youth communities and maintaining group identity. The theoretical understanding of the transformation of youth subcultures was carried out using the method of conceptual analysis of scholarly literature. Within this stage, research devoted to digital subcultures and network forms of social interaction (Ok-sanen *et al.*, 2024), online communities (Tripathi, 2024), and mechanisms of identity formation in the digital environment (Pérez-Torres, 2024) was processed. The method of conceptual analysis was used to clarify the categorical apparatus of the study and to determine the characteristics of youth associations that distinguish them from the subcultures of the industrial era.

Additionally, a case analysis of podcast projects was applied, selected according to the principle of thematic representativeness and the presence of documented influence on youth digital communities. The sample included those podcasts around which the formation of stable audience communities, the development of off-platform interaction, or the involvement of listeners in social activities were recorded. For the analysis of political subcultures, the podcasts Pod Save America (Crooked Media, n.d.) and The Rest Is Politics (Goalhanger, n.d.) were selected, as both projects demonstrate the transformation of audio content into stable political communities. The research materials included The Big Issue (2024). To study the influence of podcasts on youth climate activism, A Matter of Degrees (n.d.) was selected, as this project combines expert analysis of environmental problems with practices of public mobilisation and is oriented towards young participants of environmental movements. Materials from the University of Dayton (2023) were used for the analysis. The study of educational and civic subcultures was conducted using the example of the podcast Civics 101, which was included in the sample as a specialised project in the field of civic education and the popularisation of democratic institutions. To study participatory digital subcultures, the true crime podcasts The Vanished was selected, as this case made it possible to trace the transition from individual content consumption to the collective activity of participants in a digital community.

During the construction of the second analytical matrix, the method of functional analysis was used. The assessment was carried out according to the following criteria: formation of collective identity, socialisation function, educational function, communicative function, mobilisation function, culture-creating function, function of representation of marginalised groups, function of emotional support, function of alternative media production, function of disseminating expert knowledge, algorithmic function, and function of digital experience archiving. For each criterion, potential positive effects and possible risks were analysed simultaneously. The identification of positive impacts and potential risks for each sociocultural function of podcasts was informed by a thematic synthesis of empirical and analytical insights from A. Ismayilova (2020), P. Bártová (2022), E. Bootle (2024), S. Witmer & D. Dowling (2024), H. Scherer & E. Cohen (2025), and N. Liu *et al.* (2025). The interpretation of the obtained results was based on a combination of socio-cultural, communicative, and network approaches. The socio-cultural approach was used to analyse the formation of collective values and symbolic systems within podcast communities. The communicative approach made it possible to consider podcasts as an environment for the production and dissemination of narratives. The network approach was applied to identify interconnections between digital platforms, recommendation algorithms, and processes of self-organisation of youth communities.

RESULTS

Podcasts as a media space for the formation of youth subcultures in the digital era

The digital revolution has changed not only the technological means of accessing information but also the very logic of media consumption. Whereas the communication model was based on the dominance of television, the printed press, and radio broadcasting, by the early 2020s the centre of gravity had gradually shifted to digital platforms that provide personalised, mobile, and interactive access to content. These processes were particularly noticeable among the youth audience, for whom the digital environment has become the main space for socialisation, information acquisition, and the formation of cultural practices. Data from the Reuters Institute (Newman *et al.*, 2024) showed that the interaction of young users with information content takes place through digital platforms, primarily video services and social networks. The report emphasises the formation of the so-called “platform reset”, whereby traditional news media lose their monopoly on the production and dissemination of information because digital platforms, influencers, and independent content creators become intermediaries. At the same time, a reduction in the audience of traditional communication channels is observed. In 2023, only 48% of young people aged 16-24 watched linear television weekly, whereas in 2018 this figure stood at 76%. Young users choose YouTube, TikTok, that provide the opportunity to independently shape their own information agenda (Davies, 2024).

Audio content occupies a significant place in the structure of media consumption. Unlike video, it does not require constant visual attention and can be integrated into daily activities: studying, moving around the city, playing sports, or performing household chores. It is precisely this functional flexibility that has become one of the reasons for the rapid spread of podcasts among young users, with 83% being regular podcast listeners. Furthermore, the audience demonstrates high loyalty to selected programmes: almost three-quarters of listeners regularly return to a small number of podcasts, forming stable information communities around specific authors and topics (Ofcom, 2024). The spread of podcasts reflects a broader trend of transition from mass broadcasting to individualised content consumption. Whereas traditional media offered audiences a unified information product, podcasting functions on the principle of thematic segmentation. Users choose content according to their own interests, professional needs, political beliefs, or cultural preferences. As a result, digital audiences emerge that are united not by territorial affiliation but by shared interests and value systems.

Statistical data indicate a steady increase in the popularity of podcasts. According to the results of the Edison Research (2025a) study “The Infinite Dial 2025”, 73% of the US population aged 12 and over had consumed a podcast in audio or video format at least once, and 55% had done so within the last month. All indicators are the highest for the entire observation period. At the same time, more than half of respondents are already getting

acquainted with podcasts through video format, which demonstrates the gradual blurring of boundaries between audio and video communication. A specific feature of podcasting development has been its inclusion in the broader ecosystem of digital platforms. Podcasts no longer exist exclusively within specialised applications. A significant part of the audience finds and consumes them through YouTube, Spotify, TikTok. Such convergence of platforms changes the mechanisms of youth community formation. Whereas social networks provide rapid dissemination of information and short communication cycles, podcasts create conditions for long-term and in-depth discussion of complex topics. It is precisely this characteristic that contributes to the emergence of stable interpretive communities whose members regularly interact with a particular author or thematic direction. Unlike short messages on TikTok or Instagram, a podcast provides the opportunity for a detailed presentation of arguments, which strengthens its influence on the formation of young people’s worldview orientations.

The growing role of podcasts is also associated with a change in the young generation’s attitude towards the authority of information sources. Young users turn to personalised sources of communication, where the author acts not only as a content producer but also as an intermediary between the information environment and the audience. The factors of podcast popularity among the youth audience and their comparison with other means of obtaining information are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of traditional media, social networks, and podcasts in communication with young people

Criterion	Traditional media	Social media	Podcasts
Communication type	One-way transmission of information from editorial teams to audiences	Multidirectional interaction among users and content creators	Predominantly one-way communication accompanied by the development of parasocial relationships and thematic communities
Content control mechanism	Professional editorial selection and journalistic standards	Combination of algorithmic ranking and user-generated content	Author-driven content selection within platform recommendation systems (Spotify, YouTube, Apple Podcasts)
Average duration of contact with a single message	From a few seconds to several minutes	Predominantly seconds or minutes due to feed-based consumption	Typical episode duration ranges from 20 to 90 minutes, creating conditions for deeper engagement with a topic
Level of audience engagement	Limited by available feedback mechanisms	High level of interaction through comments, reactions, and sharing	High cognitive and emotional engagement through regular listening and trust in the host
Formation of group identity	Primarily around mass culture and national information agendas	Around trends, hashtags, and networked communities	Around shared worldviews, interests, and long-term thematic communities
Mechanisms of influence on youth	Information dissemination and socialization through editorial agendas	Viral content diffusion, social approval, and network effects	Narrative immersion, parasocial relationships, and regular contact with the speaker
Potential for subculture formation	Limited due to orientation toward mass audiences	High but short-term because of the volatility of trends	High and long-lasting due to the formation of stable audience communities
Characteristics of youth consumption	Tendency toward a declining share of young audiences	Dominant format of everyday digital consumption	One of the growing segments of the digital media market among Generation Z; consumption increased by 57% in 2023
Typical outcomes for the subcultural environment	Reinforcement of dominant cultural narratives	Rapid emergence and disappearance of digital micro-communities	Formation of stable thematic communities with their own norms, symbols, and communicative practices

Source: compiled by the author based on Edison Research (2023), N. Newman *et al.* (2024), K.T. Yorganci & L. McMurtry (2024), H. Scherer & E.L. Cohen (2025), B. Litterer *et al.* (2025)

The comparative analysis showed that podcasts occupy an intermediate position between traditional media and social networks. They are inferior to social platforms in terms of the speed of information dissemination, but surpass them in the duration of contact with the audience and the level of trust in the communicator. It is precisely the combination of long-form narrative format, regularity of consumption, and a high level of personalisation that creates favourable conditions for the formation of stable youth communities and subcultures. Unlike social networks, where interaction often depends on short-term trends, podcasts ensure the long-term reproduction of collective meanings and the maintenance of group identity.

Youth communities of the 21st century function according to different principles than the subcultures of the industrial era. Whereas for punks, metalheads, or hip-hop communities of the second half of the 20th century, the defining features were physical meeting places, local networks, and relatively stable collective identity, the digital environment has contributed to the emergence of more flexible and dynamic forms of group belonging. Subculture participants can simultaneously belong to several online communities, combine different cultural practices, and change forms of self-presentation depending on the specific platform (Tripathi, 2024). In this regard, the scholarly literature uses the concepts of “network subcultures”, “digital subcultures”, or “online subcultural communities”, which focus attention not on the territorial localisation of the group but on the communicative connections between its participants (Oksanen *et al.*, 2024). The transition of subcultures into the digital space has changed the mechanisms of their emergence. Traditionally, a subculture was formed around musical genres, style of dress, or certain political beliefs. In the digital environment, the starting points are algorithmic platform recommendations, thematic forums, Discord servers, YouTube channels, TikTok communities, or podcast networks. As a result, groups emerge whose participants may never meet physically but demonstrate a high level of symbolic cohesion through shared vocabulary, memes, values, and ways of interpreting information.

The issue of group identity acquires significance in this process. Unlike previous generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X), young people form their self-image simultaneously in offline and online spaces. Social networks are considered here as a kind of “digital social mirror” through which adolescents and young people receive feedback on their own behaviour, views, and external appearance. Constant interaction with other users contributes to the formation of a clearer sense of belonging to a particular group and helps integrate personal identity into a broader collective context. At the same time, digital platforms create conditions for experimenting with different models of self-presentation, which makes subcultural identity more fluid and multidimensional compared to previous historical periods (Pérez-Torres, 2024). The formation of digital subcultures also relies on mechanisms for the co-production of symbols and meanings. Participants are united

not only by an interest in a specific topic but also by the creation of their own information environment. Memetic culture, specific slang, inside jokes, characteristic visual elements, and shared narratives function as symbolic markers of group belonging.

The spread of podcasts in the digital environment has changed not only the ways of consuming information but also the mechanisms for forming collective perceptions of social reality. One of the specific features of podcasting is its narrative nature. Unlike most digital communication formats, audio content usually involves a long-form story, sequential plot development, and the presence of the author’s personal voice. It is the voice that becomes an instrument of social influence. The mobility of the audio format and the effect of “narrative immersion” are directly related to the strengthening of parasocial relationships between the audience and podcast hosts (Watson, 2025). Regular listening reinforces the feeling of personal familiarity with the podcaster even in the absence of real interaction between the parties (Scherer & Cohen, 2025). The phenomenon of trust in podcasters also exists among the youth audience. Unlike television or news media, where communication is perceived as formalised, podcasts create an atmosphere of informal conversation. Listeners associate the authenticity of podcasters with openness, self-disclosure, an informal manner of communication, and a willingness to demonstrate their own doubts or mistakes (Bottomley, 2024). It is precisely these characteristics that become the basis of trust in the author. It has also been established that parasocial relationships in podcasts are associated with increased trust in information, greater cognitive engagement, and the audience’s readiness to critically comprehend the proposed topics. The factors of such influence turned out to be the author’s expertise, narrative proximity, and personal self-disclosure.

The role of recommendation algorithms in the dissemination of podcast content deserves special attention. Audio platforms use algorithmic personalisation mechanisms. Spotify, YouTube Podcasts, Apple Podcasts form recommendations based on listening history, thematic interests, and behavioural characteristics of the user. As a result, the audience receives content that corresponds to their previous preferences, which increases the likelihood of long-term engagement with a particular topic. At the same time, the influence of algorithms on the spread of ideas cannot be considered exclusively through the concept of the “filter bubble”. For example, an analysis of experiments with nearly nine thousand participants showed that recommendation systems can influence the information environment of users, but they do not automatically determine their political beliefs (Liu *et al.*, 2025). Nevertheless, algorithms play a role in enhancing the visibility of certain ideas and communities. As a result, a new model of idea circulation is formed, based not on a mass audience but on networks of thematically interested users.

From the perspective of cultural analysis, podcasters act as cultural intermediaries between different social

groups, the expert community, and the youth audience. They adapt complex topics to an understandable format, select information, identify priority issues for discussion, and effectively participate in the production of the symbolic order of digital society. For this reason, podcasts cannot be viewed solely as a technological format for content dissemination. Their function lies in creating discursive spaces within which the coordination of values, the formation of group perceptions, and the construction of collective identity take place.

In the structure of the digital environment, podcasts have gradually transformed into one of the influential formats for disseminating public ideas, as podcasting provides the opportunity for long-term and detailed discussion of topics that remain outside the news cycle. It is precisely this function that facilitates the circulation of social, cultural, and political narratives among the youth audience, for whom depth of explanation becomes more significant than the speed of obtaining information (Barrios-Rubio, 2025). The specific nature of spreading ideas through audio platforms lies in the fact that communication takes place not in the form of individual messages but through series of episodes between which a meaningful sequence is formed. The listener gains the opportunity to regularly return to a particular topic, gradually accumulating knowledge and assimilating the proposed interpretations of social processes.

Podcasts have become a platform for discussing topics directly related to the interests of young people. An analysis of the catalogues of Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and YouTube Podcasts shows a steady increase in the popularity of programmes devoted to mental health, issues of identity, social justice, political participation, gender relations, work culture, ecology, and the digital lifestyle. For example, in the global annual reports for 2025, the leading positions are occupied by The Joe Rogan Experience, The Diary of A CEO with Steven Bartlett, The Mel Robbins Podcast, Call Her Daddy, Huberman Lab, and Crime Junkie (Khan, 2025). According to data from The Gen Z Audio Report (Edison Research, 2025b), among listeners aged 13-24, the most popular podcast genres are comedy, music, and entertainment. At the same time, 86% of Gen Z use audio content to improve their mood. Furthermore, research by Spotify (2025) records a change in consumption patterns during the study period: young people begin to turn more actively to podcasts about science, technology, news, and business. Thus, Generation Z uses podcasts not only as an entertainment product but also as a source of self-development, an explanation of social processes, and a search for alternative views on current events.

A practical manifestation of this process is observed in the transformation of individual podcasts into full-fledged social communities. In 2024, a number of popular podcasts in Great Britain and the United States began gathering audiences of thousands at live performances. In particular, the political podcast *The Rest Is Politics* (Goalhanger, n.d.) performed at The O2 arena in London in October 2024, attracting 15,000 spectators (The Big Issue, 2024). This

example demonstrates that podcasts are capable of fostering stable communities that extend beyond the digital realm. This is due precisely to the high level of emotional closeness between the presenters and the listeners, which gradually develops into a sense of collective belonging. The ability of podcasts to unite an audience around shared topics has a direct influence on the formation of young people's worldviews. Podcasts raise issues that are difficult to explore fully in the format of short videos or social media posts. The length of the episodes allows creators to examine complex issues in a broader context, bring in experts and offer alternative interpretations of social processes. As a result, podcasts become platforms for developing shared approaches to understanding reality.

An illustrative example is also the American political podcast *Pod Save America* (Crooked Media, n.d.), created by former employees of the Barack Obama administration. After its launch in 2017, it gradually transformed into one of the most influential political media projects among the young audience in the United States. The programme analyses political events and also systematically integrates calls for civic participation. During election campaigns, the project team implemented the *Vote Save America* initiative, aimed at voter registration, volunteer activities, and involving citizens in the electoral process. According to data from the organisation Crooked Media, associated with the podcast, through the *Vote Save America* platform, hundreds of thousands of volunteer actions and voter contacts were mobilised during the 2020-2024 election campaigns (Bártová, 2022). This example demonstrates a fundamental function of podcasting: the boundary between informational activity and civic mobilisation becomes less noticeable. The podcast ceases to be exclusively a source of information and begins to perform the function of an organisational infrastructure for social participation.

Another example is the British podcast *The Rest Is Politics* (Goalhanger, n.d.), created by former Director of Communications for the UK government Alastair Campbell and former minister Rory Stewart. Launched in 2022, it quickly became one of the country's most popular political podcasts, and its audience extended far beyond the digital environment (Geddes-O'Dolan, 2025). The podcast effectively became the centre for the formation of a specific political subculture of young listeners, characterised by regular consumption of analytical content, participation in discussions, attendance at offline events, and engagement in the discussion of socio-political processes. The project's popularity contributed to the transfer of political discussions from traditional media to the environment of youth audio communities, where politics is perceived not as a formal institutional sphere but as an element of everyday culture.

Similar mechanisms are observed in the sphere of youth climate activism. The podcast *A Matter of Degrees* (n.d.), hosted by American climate policy researchers Leah Stokes and Kathryn Wilkinson, is primarily oriented towards young civic activists and supporters of environmental movements. The project's content combines explanations

of the causes of climate change with demonstrations of successful public campaigns, examples of environmental mobilisation, and practical tools for participation in climate initiatives. The podcast is created in partnership with the University of California's The 2035 Initiative and the All We Can Save project, and its episodes systematically cover the activities of environmental movements, decarbonisation mechanisms, and tools for citizens to influence climate policy (University of Dayton, 2023). As a result, a subculture of youth climate activism forms around such podcasts, where audio content performs not only an informational but also a mobilisation function. Listeners receive not just knowledge about environmental problems but concrete scenarios for civic participation, which facilitates the transition from passive interest to practical activity.

A separate area of influence is associated with the formation of civic and educational subcultures. A characteristic example is the American podcast Civics 101, created by the public media organisation New Hampshire Public Radio. The project specialises in explaining the mechanisms of democracy, electoral processes, the judicial system, and state institutions of the United States. The podcast is actively integrated into the educational environment: educational materials, interactive tasks, and resources for teachers and students are developed for it. During the presidential election period, New Hampshire Public Radio implemented a special project within which the Civics 101 team provided young people and educators with daily explanations regarding the functioning of American democracy, electoral procedures, and political institutions (Ismayilova, 2020). Thus, a distinct youth civic subculture is formed, whose

participants use podcasts as an alternative tool for political socialisation and non-formal education.

A pronounced subcultural effect is observed in cases where listeners move from content consumption to collective activity. An example is the community around the true crime podcast The Vanished. Listeners of the project actively interact in digital communities on Facebook and Reddit, collectively analyse criminal case materials, exchange information, and participate in the search for missing persons. The authors define this phenomenon as a form of participatory journalism, within which the audience ceases to be a passive consumer of information and assumes the role of a participant in socially significant activity (Witmer & Dowling, 2024). In this case, the podcast becomes the core of a subculture with specific norms of interaction, its own values, and a high level of collective engagement.

The specificity of youth podcast subcultures lies in their hybrid nature. Unlike traditional youth subcultures of the late 20th century, which were built around musical genres or styles of dress, contemporary audio communities are formed around shared interests, values, and information practices. Their development is supported through Discord servers, Reddit communities, Patreon platforms, live streams, and offline events. As a result, podcasts perform the role of social institutions that not only disseminate information but also shape the collective identity of young people. It is precisely this ability to combine content, communication, and shared activity that is one of the reasons for the growing influence of podcasts on youth subcultures. The advantages and risks of the influence of podcasts on the youth community are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Socio-cultural functions of podcasts in the youth environment: potential and risks

Sociocultural function of podcasts	Positive impact on youth subcultures and movements	Potential risks and limitations
Collective identity formation	Creation of shared symbolic frameworks, values, and behavioural models; support for a sense of community belonging regardless of geographical distance (communities surrounding The Vanished, The Rest Is Politics)	Strengthening of group insularity and distancing from alternative social groups; formation of narrow information environments
Socialization function	Acquisition of new norms of civic participation, environmental responsibility, political engagement, or cultural consumption (Pod Save America, A Matter of Degrees)	Normalization of viewpoints that have not undergone professional expertise or fact-checking
Educational function	Access to complex topics beyond formal education; popularization of political science, history, law, and psychology (Civics 101, The Happiness Lab)	Oversimplification of complex issues through authorial interpretation; dependence of knowledge quality on the host's competence
Communicative function	Establishment of long-term horizontal connections among listeners; development of digital communities through Discord, Reddit, and Patreon	Transfer of discussions into closed communicative environments with limited exposure to alternative viewpoints
Mobilization function	Promotion of participation in elections, volunteer campaigns, civic initiatives, and environmental actions	Use of audiences for political mobilization without sufficient pluralism of opinions
Cultural-creative function	Development of new subcultural codes, slang, symbolism, and interaction practices (political, sports, and true crime communities)	Cultural fragmentation and the growth of isolated micro-communities
Representation function for marginalized groups	Providing a voice to communities underrepresented in traditional media; fostering inclusive discussions	Emergence of alternative information spaces characterized by a low level of external criticism
Emotional support function	Creation of a sense of social inclusion and psychological support through regular interaction with hosts and community members	Development of excessive parasocial relationships with media personalities

Table 2. Continued

Sociocultural function of podcasts	Positive impact on youth subcultures and movements	Potential risks and limitations
Alternative media production function	Reduction of barriers to entry into the media sphere; opportunity for young people to create their own content without substantial financial resources	Lack of editorial oversight and dissemination of unverified information
Expert knowledge dissemination function	Rapid dissemination of scientific findings, civic practices, and professional expertise	Emergence of pseudo-experts who gain high audience trust due to the popularity of the format
Algorithmic function	Facilitation of access to niche interests and specialized subcultures through recommendation systems of Spotify, YouTube, and Apple Podcasts	Formation of information bubbles through algorithmic reinforcement of similar content
Digital archiving function	Accumulation of collective community memory; preservation of histories of activism, local movements, and cultural practices	Reinforcement of one-sided interpretations of historical or political events within particular communities

Source: compiled by the author based on Goalhanger (n.d.), Crooked Media (n.d.), A Matter of Degrees (n.d.), The Happiness Lab Podcast (n.d.), A. Ismayilova (2020), P. Bártoová (2022), E. Bootle (2024), S. Witmer & D.O. Dowling (2024), H. Scherer & E.L. Cohen (2025), N. Liu *et al.* (2025)

The presented data demonstrated that evaluating the influence of podcasts solely through the categories of “benefit” or “harm” is insufficient. The analysis revealed a different pattern: the majority of socio-cultural effects of podcasting are dual in nature. The very mechanisms that ensure a high level of integration of young people into a community can simultaneously create prerequisites for its isolation from the broader information environment. In particular, parasocial closeness to hosts contributes to trust and stability of communities, but at the same time increases the audience’s susceptibility to one-sided interpretations of events. Similarly, algorithmic personalisation helps young users find content that matches their interests, yet simultaneously reduces the likelihood of contact with alternative viewpoints.

The transformation of the very nature of subcultures acquires significance. Traditional youth subcultures of the second half of the 20th century were usually formed around musical styles, local territories, or specific forms of leisure. In the case of podcast communities, the central element becomes the shared interpretation of social reality. The unifying factor is not an external lifestyle but a set of narratives, values, and communicative practices. This explains why podcasts demonstrate effectiveness in the environments of political activism, civic education, climate movements, or communities related to mental health. Another characteristic feature is the gradual blurring of boundaries between media consumption and social participation. In many cases, listening to a podcast becomes only the initial stage of involvement in community activity. Further interaction moves to Discord servers, Patreon networks, thematic forums, or offline events (Rubio Arevich, 2025). As a result, podcasts perform the function of infrastructure for supporting collective activity, rather than merely a channel for information transmission.

The identified patterns also demonstrated a change in the principles of forming youth subcultures in the digital environment. Whereas in the industrial and early digital era, the consolidation of youth communities was mainly based on shared consumption styles, musical preferences,

or symbolic distancing from the dominant culture, network associations in the 2020s are formed around the interpretation of social issues, the development of shared value orientations, and participation in specific social practices. The analysed examples showed that podcasts act as one of the environments within which the construction of such communities takes place, ensuring the long-term reproduction of shared meanings and the maintenance of intra-group communication. At the same time, the spread of podcast communities is accompanied by a complication of the structure of the digital public space. The formation of a large number of thematically specialised audiences contributes to the diversification of youth culture and the emergence of new forms of collective identity, but simultaneously strengthens the segmentation of the communicative environment. Therefore, the socio-cultural effect of podcasts is determined not only by the content but also by the nature of the communicative practices that form around it.

DISCUSSION

The results of the conducted study have made it possible to consider podcasts not only as a channel for disseminating information but as a distinct mechanism for the formation of youth subcultures, collective identity, and models of social participation. The obtained conclusions correlate with the results presented in the work of N.A. Askar & N. Mellor (2024), which established that young listener use podcasts simultaneously for entertainment, information acquisition, and personal development. The study also found that the influence of podcasts on youth communities is not limited to the informational function. The analysed cases of Civics 101, Pod Save America, A Matter of Degrees, and The Rest Is Politics demonstrated a combination of educational, worldview, and mobilisational influence. At the same time, the results of the aforementioned authors focused primarily on the individual level of content consumption, whereas the study made it possible to trace the next stage of this process – the transformation of trust in the podcaster into the formation of stable digital

communities. The conclusion regarding the role of trust in the host as a prerequisite for the emergence of collective forms of interaction gained significance and directly correlates with the results of the cited authors.

A similar nature of comparison was observed with the conclusions of the scoping review by Y. Zou *et al.* (2025). The authors concluded that podcasts effectively increase the level of youth awareness regarding health issues, but evidence of their impact on actual behavioural changes remains limited. The study was not aimed at assessing behavioural changes in the field of health, but the analysis of podcasts of civic, political, and climate orientation revealed the presence of mechanisms through which audio content moves from informing to practical participation. Thus, the results of the scholars confirm the ability of podcasts to influence the knowledge and attitudes of the audience, while the study expands this conclusion by demonstrating the conditions under which informational influence transforms into collective social practices. A comparison of the results with the study by T. Sharon & N. John (2025), devoted to parasocial relationships between podcasters and the audience, required attention. The authors showed that the central element of such relationships is the image of the imagined listener, constructed by the content creator themselves. The obtained results confirmed the role of this mechanism. The analysis of political, educational, and activist podcasts showed that communities form around a sense of shared experience between the host and the listener. At the same time, the study made it possible to expand the authors' interpretation, as it demonstrated that parasocial closeness performs the function not only of interpersonal connection but also of a mechanism for forming group identity. It is through this that stable subcultural environment emerged, which gradually extend beyond the digital platform.

Comparison with the work of R. Bhoj *et al.* (2024) revealed another aspect of the research problem. The study showed that digital media contributed to the formation of multiple identities and the recreation of subcultures through mechanisms of self-presentation and cultural mixing. The study confirmed similar processes, but within the audio communication environment. Whereas the scholars analysed primarily visual platforms and subcultures associated with style and external representation, the results of the podcast study showed a shift in emphasis from external cultural markers to shared narratives, values, and ways of interpreting social reality. The obtained data indicated that youth subcultures have formed around information practices rather than aesthetic characteristics. In this aspect, the authors' conclusions correlate with the study, although they reflect a different stage of digital subculture development.

A level of consistency was also found with the results of H. Weber (2022), who investigated the role of climate podcasts in stimulating environmental activity. The author emphasised the importance of storytelling and the concept of collective action for engaging listeners in climate practices. The analysis of the podcast *A Matter of Degrees* led to similar conclusions. It was established that

environmental topics are disseminated not through isolated informational messages but through the sequential formation of collective interpretations of climate problems. At the same time, the study made it possible to specify the socio-cultural dimension of this process. Whereas H. Weber focused primarily on the communication mechanisms of motivation to action, the obtained results demonstrated that separate youth communities with shared norms, values, and models of civic participation emerge around climate podcasts. Thus, the author's conclusions received additional confirmation through the analysis of the sub-cultural potential of climate podcasting.

At the same time, the results of the study by M.E. Rasul *et al.* (2025) allowed for a critical rethinking of certain aspects of podcast influence. The authors demonstrated a connection between the consumption of alternative political podcasts, the spread of misinformation, and the increase in contentious political participation. The study also revealed the presence of risks associated with the high level of trust in podcasters and the formation of closed information environments. In particular, during the analysis of political audio communities, it was established that the very mechanisms that contributed to community cohesion could simultaneously limit contacts with alternative positions. However, the results did not confirm an automatic link between political mobilisation and misinformation. On the contrary, the processed cases demonstrated the possibility of using podcasts for the development of civic participation without reliance on conspiratorial narratives. In this aspect, the scholars' conclusions do not contradict the study but reflect one of the possible scenarios for the development of political podcast communities.

One direction of comparison was the results of the scoping review by L. Persohn & S. Branson (2025), devoted to academic podcasting. The authors considered podcasts as a tool for democratising access to knowledge and overcoming the barriers of traditional scientific communication. The study confirmed the relevance of this approach. An analysis of the podcast *Civics 101* showed that complex political and legal issues were adapted to a format understandable to young people without losing substantive depth. At the same time, the results made it possible to expand the scholars' conclusions, as it was shown that the dissemination of knowledge through podcasts is accompanied by the formation of thematic communities. The educational function turned out to be inextricably linked with the socialisation function, and content consumption gradually transitioned into collective forms of interaction.

The comparison with the work of S.J. Kakungulu (2025), which examined podcasts as a tool for civic education and public dialogue, proved revealing. The obtained results are almost completely consistent with the main provisions of that work. The analysis of the cases demonstrated that podcasts have indeed created conditions for long-term discussion of public topics and have acted as alternative channels for the political socialisation of young people. At the same time, the study made it possible to detail the

mechanisms of such influence. It was established that the effectiveness of podcasts in the field of civic education is determined not only by the content of information but also by the existence of stable audience communities around them. It is precisely these communities that ensure the long-term reproduction of shared meanings and maintain collective identity. At the same time, the results also confirmed the warnings of S.J. Kakungulu regarding the risks of misinformation. The analysis showed that the openness of the podcast environment has created conditions both for the dissemination of expert knowledge and for the emergence of alternative information spaces with an insufficient level of external criticism.

Overall, the comparison of the obtained results with empirical and theoretical research demonstrated a high level of consistency regarding the understanding of podcasts as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The majority of works focused attention on individual aspects of this phenomenon – trust in hosts, civic education, knowledge dissemination, political mobilisation, identity formation, or the development of climate activism. The study made it possible to unite these directions within a single analytical framework and to show that the main characteristic of podcasting has been its transformation into an infrastructure for youth subcultures. It is precisely around podcasts that the combination of information consumption, socialisation, formation of collective meanings, and practical participation takes place. Such functionality explains why podcasts in the 2020s have begun to play a noticeable role in the transformation of models of youth communication and the emergence of new forms of digital group belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

The study established that podcasts occupy an intermediate position between traditional media and social networks, surpassing social platforms in audience contact duration and trust in the communicator. This combination creates conditions for the formation of stable youth subcultures. Globally, 73% of the US population aged 12+ have consumed podcasts at least once, and 55% have done so within the last month. Podcasts have transformed

into platforms for disseminating youth movement ideologies. The political podcast *The Rest Is Politics* gathered approximately 15,000 spectators at The O2 arena in London, demonstrating the transition of audio content into offline communities. *Pod Save America*, through the *Vote Save America* platform, mobilised hundreds of thousands of volunteer actions during the 2020-2024 election campaigns, blurring the boundary between information and civic mobilisation. Around the climate podcast *A Matter of Degrees*, a subculture of youth environmental activism has formed, while the community around the true crime podcast *The Vanished* moved from passive consumption to collective participation in missing persons searches, exemplifying participatory journalism.

The socio-cultural analysis revealed twelve functions of podcasts in the youth environment, each with a dual nature. For example, parasocial closeness builds trust but increases susceptibility to one-sided interpretations; algorithmic personalisation helps find relevant content yet reduces exposure to alternative views; digital archiving preserves collective memory while reinforcing one-sided narratives; mobilisation engages youth in civic actions but risks audience exploitation without pluralism. Thus, podcast influence is determined not only by content but also by the combination of parasocial interaction, algorithmic personalisation, and network self-organisation. A limitation of this study is its reliance on English-language sources and cases from North America and Western Europe. Further research should quantitatively measure parasocial relationship intensity across podcast genres and develop methods to assess audio content's long-term influence on youth worldviews.

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Impact of digital platforms on the integration of migrants and the development of new social identities

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Abstract. The purpose of the study was to find out the importance of social networks and digital platforms in the process of refugee integration and assess their impact on the adaptation and development of social identities. The research methodology included the use of content analysis, thematic coding, comparative analysis of digital platforms and integration programmes. Online communities, social networks, and news platforms in Germany, Canada, and South Africa were reviewed to analyse the processes of linguistic and cultural adaptation, professional integration, access to resources, interaction with local communities, and the development of new social identities. It was established that digital platforms play a comprehensive role in the social adaptation of refugees, providing access to up-to-date information, creating a space for the exchange of experience, mutual support, and professional integration. User activity on X, LinkedIn, Facebook, and on the news portals Der Spiegel, Bild, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Help, and Reuters were analysed, which helped to determine the effectiveness of these resources in forming social connections and supporting adaptation processes. The platforms help to reduce social isolation, raise awareness of rights, social and health services, and develop professional adaptation skills. It is recommended to create integrated digital ecosystems to support refugees, combining traditional media, social networks, and mobile applications that provide access to information, professional adaptation, and social interaction. Such approaches are based on the experience of Germany, Canada, and South Africa, where targeted use of digital platforms increased the effectiveness of integration processes and reduced social isolation. The practical significance of the study is that the information can be used by social workers, refugee support organisations, and local communities to develop and implement digital integration programmes, language and vocational training, and support the social adaptation of migrants

Keywords: cultural exchange; cultural adaptation; employment support; online communities; communication methods

INTRODUCTION

The dynamic expansion of digital platforms is changing the way people communicate, access information and participate in public life. In a globalised environment, migration processes are accompanied by the development of new channels of interaction between displaced persons and host communities. Digital environments are not only a tool for spreading information, but also a space for creating new social networks, cultural practices, and behaviours. The inclusion of migrants in social and economic processes is increasingly taking place through online platforms that open up opportunities for training, employment, maintaining cultural ties, and engaging in social activities. Such processes contribute to the emergence of new forms of social identity that combine local and cross-border elements. The

study of this problem helps to find out the mechanisms of interaction between digital platforms and social transformations in the migration environment, and to assess the prospects for using digital resources for the development of inclusive practices and intercultural dialogue.

A systematic study of scientific papers revealed the impact of digital platforms on the integration of migrants and the development of new social identities. For example, M. Barker (2021) analysed the process of social integration of new arrivals during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising that digital platforms are becoming a key channel for maintaining social connections in conditions of physical isolation. The researcher found that online communities provide an opportunity to share experience and

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information, contributing to the adaptation of migrants to new social norms and cultural contexts. Similar findings were presented by B. Svoen *et al.* (2021), who showed that digital stories and online learning resources contribute to increasing the social inclusion of migrants, forming new ways of communication and community interaction. Participation in digital communities strengthens the sense of belonging to the collective and supports the development of cross-cultural skills among migrants.

M. Cheesman (2022) found that the digital identity of refugees performs a dual function: on the one hand, it serves as a means of self – expression and maintaining an autonomous social presence, on the other – as a tool for accessing social and economic resources. However, its use is accompanied by legal and ethical challenges related to the control of personal data and the protection of users' rights. A similar perspective on digital identity management was presented by S. Madon & E. Schoemaker (2021), who showed that refugee management platforms allow organising data, while creating a space for building social connections and interacting with host communities. The researchers noted that such platforms not only optimise access to administrative and social services but also build trust between refugees and institutions. They stressed the risks of over-reliance on digital technologies, which can increase inequality if access to them is restricted. S. Masiero & S. Bailur (2021) expanded the analysis by proposing the concept of digital identity as a tool for development and social justice. They found that access to digital platforms can increase the chances of migrants participating in public life and integrating into new social structures. These results were consistent with the study by A. Yau *et al.* (2020), who demonstrated that social media acts as a medium for identity negotiations in the acculturation process, allowing migrants to keep in touch with their own cultural heritage and simultaneously integrate into the host society. Active participation in social media contributes to the development of digital literacy and the development of strategies for adapting to new socio-cultural conditions.

Self-presentation of migrants and refugees in digital news was analysed by L. Chouliaraki (2017), finding that online media creates boundaries through which collective and individual identities are formed. The researcher noted that the way information is presented in digital media affects the perception of migrants by the local audience and the level of their social inclusion. The study by S. Park & L. Gerrits (2021) showed that online networks allow migrants to exhibit cross-border identity, while maintaining connections with their parent's countries and creating new local social spaces. Participation in such networks contributes to the development of cross-cultural competencies and increased social support among migrant communities. G. Udwan *et al.* (2020) examined the digital resilience of Syrian refugees in the Netherlands, highlighting that social media performs three key functions: providing social support, access to health information, and developing a new identity. The researchers found that the use of digital resources

reduces feelings of isolation, promotes sharing of experiences, and increases awareness of available services. It was noted that digital tools are becoming an important factor in adaptation and integration into the host society. These results were consistent with the findings of W. Guo (2025), who reported that Chinese students in the UK use social media for cultural navigation and adaptation, maintaining social connections and changing their own social roles. Active use of digital platforms helps students form hybrid identities by combining elements of native and host cultures.

Despite the aspects highlighted by the above researchers, the gaps included insufficient study of the impact of digital platforms on the long-term integration of migrants into local communities. There was a lack of research that analysed the interaction of different types of digital media and their impact on the development of hybrid or transnational social identities. The purpose of the study was to analyse how social networks and digital platforms contribute to the integration of refugees in different countries. The objectives of the study were: comparative analysis of digital platforms and programmes for integrating refugees into the Germany, Canada, and South Africa; content analysis of media for the study of refugee integration; development of recommendations on the use of digital platforms in support of refugee integration processes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study conducted a comparative analysis of digital platforms and programmes for refugee integration in three countries: Germany, Canada, and South Africa. The choice of these countries was justified by the variety of approaches to migration policy, socio-economic conditions, and the scale of migration flows: Germany represents a large European context with a high level of digitalisation and integration programmes, Canada is known for an integrated and inclusive approach to refugees, and South Africa allows evaluating the effectiveness of digital tools in a country with high migrant mobility. The most common and representative digital platforms that provide distance learning, language training, cultural adaptation, and employment support were selected for the analysis. In Germany, this was the Migrant E-Learning Platform (n.d.) and Integreat (n.d.), in Canada – LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, 2024) and Arrive Platform, in South Africa – Mobile Applications Refugee social media Hub (Refugee Council, n.d.) and MobiJobs (2021). The choice of these platforms was conditioned by their complexity, high level of interactivity and ability to cover various aspects of integration, including social interaction, professional training, and monitoring of user progress. The effectiveness of the platforms was evaluated according to the main criteria: availability of resources, interactivity of courses, coverage of language training and cultural adaptation, employment support, and the ability to monitor user progress.

The study identified countries and types of media to analyse: in Germany – social networks X (n.d.), LinkedIn (n.d.), and WhatsApp (n.d.), news portals Der

Spiegel Staff (2018), Bild (Schupelius, 2025), and Reuters (2025); in Canada – the news service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC News, 2017) and thematic Facebook groups for migrants, in particular Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (n.d.); in South Africa – news portal of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Help (UNHCR Help, n.d.). In addition, the value of digital tools International Organisation for Migration (n.d.), Amazon Web Services (n.d.) was presented. The criteria for the analysis were the adaptation of refugees, interaction with local communities, preservation of their own culture, and creation of new communication practices. The main method of research was a qualitative study of content (content analysis) of text materials and user comments, which helped to identify key narratives regarding the integration and self-identification of refugees. Concurrently, thematic coding of messages in social networks and news materials was applied to highlight the main topics: access to resources, legal support, cultural exchange, and interaction with the host society. To assess differences in the use of digital platforms in different countries, a comparative analysis was conducted covering the educational, linguistic, cultural, and professional areas of integration. This allowed comparing how different platforms support social connections, professional development and cultural adaptation of refugees, and to determine the specifics of user interaction in different media environments. The final stage in the study was the generalisation of the obtained data in the form of recommendations regarding the use of digital platforms to support refugee integration processes.

RESULTS

Comparative analysis of digital platforms and refugee integration programmes in different countries. Online communities, social networks, and news platforms form a digital environment that promotes migrant integration through information sharing, social interaction, and access to resources. Online communities provide support and a sense of belonging, social networks Facebook (n.d.), LinkedIn (n.d.), WhatsApp (n.d.) help to maintain contacts, disseminate information, and establish professional connections, and news platforms inform and shape public opinion. Digital tools such as IOM (International Organisation for Migration, n.d.), AWS Migration Hub (Amazon Web Services, n.d.) or the Migrant E-Learning Platform (n.d.), provide access to educational courses, consultations and labour markets, which reduces social isolation and increases the level of employment. Thus, the effectiveness of digital platforms is determined by the availability, level of digital skills and user engagement, which makes them a key mechanism for social adaptation and the development of new identities of migrants in host societies. The situation with migration and integration of refugees in each country is different due to different social, economic, and legal conditions, which leads to the development of its own integration programmes and the use of specific digital tools (International Organisation for Migration, n.d.). Table 1 shows the diversity of digital platforms and refugee integration programmes in countries, reflecting the specifics of national approaches and targeted needs of migrants.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of digital platforms and refugee integration programmes in Germany, Canada, and South Africa

Comparison criteria	Germany	Canada	South Africa
Programme/ Platform	Migrant E-Learning Platform, Integreat	LINC, Arrive Platform	Refugee Social Media Hub, MobiJobs
Resource type	Online platform, mobile application	Online platform, mobile application	Mobile applications, social networks
Language training	German language courses, interactive exercises	English and French language courses, online lessons	Short English courses, interactive exercises
Cultural adaptation	Videos, interactive scenarios, information about local services	Webinars on cultural adaptation, trainings on cross-cultural interaction	Information about social services, local communities, and cultural norms
Employment support	Resume tips, webinars on job search, contacts of employment centres	Career guidance programmes, consultations, access to job databases	Vacancies via mobile services, short trainings on entrepreneurship
User demographics	Age 18-50, secondary and higher education, new arrivals	Aged 18-55, different levels of education, both new arrivals and long-term migrants	Aged 18-40, young people, mostly migrants from Africa
Training format	Remote, webinars, mobile access	Online courses, offline community support	Mobile applications, blended learning
Coverage (number of refugees)	~2,000	~1,500	~1,100
Additional features	Forum for participants, mentoring support, offline access	Personalised plans, integration with local organisations, family support	Push notifications, low-cost Internet access, localisation for different regions

Source: compiled by the authors based on the analysis of programmes Migrant E-Learning Platform (n.d.), Integreat (n.d.), Refugee Council (n.d.), European Commission (n.d.), MobiJobs (2021), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (2024)

A comparative analysis of digital platforms and refugee integration programmes in Germany, Canada, and South Africa demonstrated diverse approaches to supporting migrants and adapting them to a new environment. In Germany, the Migrant E-Learning Platform and Integreat not only provide comprehensive language training and cultural adaptation, but also actively contribute to the creation of online communities where refugees can share experiences, receive support from mentors, and form a sense of social belonging. An analysis of user activity showed that the most involved participants become information centres, spreading important news about training courses, vacancies, medical services, and local events, which increases the speed of integration and provides more even access to resources among different demographic groups. In Canada, the LINC and Arrive Platform programmes focus on cross-cultural interaction and professional orientation, providing refugees with the opportunity to participate in webinars, distance courses, and practical employment trainings. Research on the use of these platforms has shown that regular interaction with online resources enhances the digital skills of migrants, promotes the expansion of social networks, and allows them to adapt more effectively to the cultural and legal characteristics of the host society. In addition, the platforms support the development of user autonomy in career planning, access to information about state and public services, and in establishing contacts with local communities, which significantly reduces the risk of social isolation (Zwysen & Piasna, 2024). In South Africa, the Refugee Social Media Hub (Refugee Council, n.d.) and MobiJobs (2021) mobile applications serve as operational tools that provide access to up-to-date information on job vacancies, medical and social services, and help to form local support communities. The result of the comparison showed that such digital tools are important for young migrants and those who have limited access to traditional resources, as they allow them to quickly navigate a new environment and integrate into socio-economic processes. Social networks and mobile forums in South Africa are actively used to share practical advice on housing, employment and legal aspects, creating mechanisms of mutual assistance and support, which increases the resilience of migrants to social and economic challenges.

Key factors for the effectiveness of digital platforms are the availability of resources, social media activity, the level of digital skills, and the integration of cultural and professional components into educational and communication processes. In all three countries, digital platforms not only facilitate access to education, cultural adaptation, and employment, but also create conditions for the development of collective identity and sustainable social ties. In general, the results of the analysis show that an effective combination of online platforms, mobile applications, and social networks provides a comprehensive mechanism for supporting refugees, contributing to their social adaptation, professional integration, and strengthening of digital competencies.

Content analysis of media to study refugee integration. In Germany, the news portals Der Spiegel and Bild played an important role in shaping refugee narratives. Der Spiegel's materials focused on the difficulties of cross-cultural communication and employment problems (Der Spiegel Staff, 2018). The article described both positive stories of mutual assistance and cases of distrust that generated sceptical comments from readers. Users actively discussed in the comments section, some emphasising the importance of educational programmes for refugees, while others criticised the state integration policy (22 Germans speak..., n.d.). The Bild portal (Schupelius, 2025) was dominated by more emotional narratives, in particular, stories of successful integration of Syrian families. Such materials collected a large number of positive reviews, in which users shared their own experience of helping refugees, which contributed to creating an image of shared responsibility. Among social networks, the role of LinkedIn was notable, where professional integration was discussed in publications (European Commission Directorate-General..., 2025). Users shared employment stories, recommended trainings and educational courses, which created space for building new professional identities. Social network X (n.d.) has become a platform for discussions on political decisions and anti-refugee sentiments. The publications showed how negative rhetoric creates tension in society but simultaneously encourages protective mobilisation in favour of refugees. This showed a double effect: increased polarisation but also increased solidarity.

In Canada, the key information resource was the service CBC News (2017). The materials highlighted the positive transformations in local communities that have taken place due to the active participation of Syrian refugees in cultural and educational projects. Comments under the article showed a high level of empathy: users shared stories of cooperation and noted that migrants enrich the multicultural environment of Canada. In addition, Facebook groups organised by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (n.d.) have become an important digital platform. Practical information on legalisation procedures, housing and educational opportunities was disseminated in these groups. Analysis of the comments showed that the refugees actively sought advice and received responses from other participants, creating mutual support networks. There were also negative reactions – isolated comments with doubts about public policy, but their number was lower compared to supporting messages. This demonstrated the high ability of the Canadian digital environment to contribute to the development of a positive social identity of refugees.

In South Africa, Reuters and UNHCR Help played an important role in covering the topic of refugees. Reuters (2025) reported on protests in support of refugees who were threatened with deportation. Readers comments on social networks were polarised: some showed solidarity, others – open hostility, which indicated the complexity of

the integration process in the region. UNHCR Help (n.d.) publications focused on refugees' access to education and medicine. In the comments, users shared their own experience of receiving help, which contributed to the development of practical support communities. Social networks, in particular X (UNHCR, 2024), were actively used to spread success stories – for example, stories about refugees who were able to start their own businesses or get an education in South Africa. Thus, digital media and social networks have become an important tool for integrating refugees, providing information and cultural support, stimulating

the creation of new social connections and strengthening self-identification processes in a globalised environment. In general, digital media is a critical component of the integration process, while providing information, social, and cultural support. They contribute to the development of new social connections, cultural exchange and the development of new identities in the context of globalisation and digitalisation. Table 2 illustrates the main messages, user comments, and digital tools that contribute to the integration of refugees and the development of new social identities in social networks.

Table 2. Content and interactions of refugees on digital platforms

Criteria	Germany (Der Spiegel, LinkedIn)	Canada (CBC, Facebook)	South Africa (Reuters, X)
Main messages/ texts	Der Spiegel: articles about integration difficulties (language barriers, labour market); LinkedIn: publications about professional opportunities, courses, and vacancies	CBC: materials on the adaptation of Syrian refugees, the role of local communities in support; Facebook: tips on documents, housing, education, access to government programmes	Reuters: news of anti-deportation protests, refugee legal issues; X: reports on access to education, medicine, success stories
User comments/ reactions	Der Spiegel – discussions on public integration policies (both support and criticism); LinkedIn – sharing success stories, network contacts, professional advice	CBC – mainly empathy and positive feedback about refugees; Facebook groups – active exchange of practical advice, formation of support communities	Reuters – polarisation: solidarity and hostility; X – reposts and discussions about access to resources, isolated manifestations of hate
Digital tools	Articles, interviews, comments on Der Spiegel; posts, comments and group discussions on LinkedIn	News articles and multimedia reports on CBC; posts, comments, group discussions on Facebook	Reports, interviews, photo and video content on Reuters; tweets, retweets, comments on X
Impact on integration and identity	Development of two types of narratives: critical (through discussions) and supportive (through professional integration); creation of new professional identities	Strengthening of multiculturalism, development of the image of a refugee as an active participant in the community; strengthening horizontal ties through Facebook groups	Simultaneous dissemination of solidarity and prejudice; formation of dual identity (belonging and discriminatory experience); creation of practical support communities

Source: compiled by the authors based on LinkedIn (n.d.), Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (n.d.), European Parliament (2020), MobiJobs (2021), UNHCR (2024), Global Refuge (2025), Reuters (2025)

The analysis of the generalised data presented in the table revealed common and distinctive features of the functioning of digital platforms in different countries. In Germany, the main focus was on professional integration and cross-cultural communication. News resources created both critical and supportive narratives, while social media provided a space for sharing practical advice and success stories, which stimulated the development of new professional identities. In Canada, digital media has reinforced multicultural discourse, emphasised the contribution of refugees to the development of local communities, and created an environment of empathy. Communication in Facebook groups contributed to the development of horizontal connections and practical mutual support, which formed a positive image of the refugee as an active participant in public life. In South Africa, the situation turned out to be more controversial: news portals focused on protests, legal barriers and socio-economic challenges, and social networks reproduced both solidarity and discriminatory narratives. This led to the emergence of a dual identity of refugees, who simultaneously experienced the experience of belonging to a new community and discriminatory pressure. The summary analysis showed that digital platforms not only inform, but also actively participate in the development of new social identities. They serve as a space for

discussion, promote the development of communication and professional networks, and create an environment for mutual assistance and mobilisation. However, these platforms reproduce negative stereotypes, increasing polarisation in society. Thus, their influence is twofold: they can be an instrument of integration and solidarity, but simultaneously – a source of conflict and alienation. That is why the analysis of media content and social networks revealed the multidimensional nature of integration processes and proved that the digital space is a key factor in building new identities of refugees in a globalised world.

Recommendations for using digital platforms to support refugee integration processes. The development of digital technologies has changed the mechanisms of adaptation of refugees, providing them with new opportunities for obtaining information, communication, and forming social identities. An analysis of cases in Germany, Canada, and South Africa has shown that digital media can be both a tool of solidarity and support, and a space for reproducing stereotypes and biases. In the German case, there was a combination of two different trends: critical discussions at Der Spiegel often highlighted the difficulties of adaptation, while LinkedIn became a space for professional growth and success stories. Such dualism requires a balanced strategy. It is recommended that the editorial

offices of Der Spiegel and Bild, in partnership with public organisations, create special online sections with stories of successful integration. These can be multimedia series “Integration Stories”, in which refugees will talk about obtaining professional skills, starting a business or studying at universities. Implementation can be carried out through interactive articles with videos and comments, which will be published on the main portals and duplicated on Facebook (n.d.) and X (n.d.), providing wider coverage. On LinkedIn (n.d.), it is advisable to create verified professional communities for refugees in certain industries – for example, “Refugees in Tech Germany” or “Healthcare Refugee Network”. In these communities, German employers can post vacancies, and mentors can conduct regular online sessions with job advice. This can be achieved through LinkedIn’s partnership with German labour exchanges (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and professional training programmes. It is advisable to use the X Social Network in Germany as a platform for communication between state structures and refugees. The Ministry of Migration can create an official account with multilingual infographics about the rules of stay, German language courses, and available social assistance programmes. The implementation requires a team of moderators who will answer users’ questions in the comments, thereby reducing the risk of misinformation spreading.

The Canadian experience has shown that CBC, as a traditional media outlet, plays a key role in shaping a positive image of a refugee, while Facebook groups provide practical interaction. It is recommended that the CBC News (2017) has expanded its multimedia headings by creating regular documentary series about the contribution of refugees to local communities. These can be short video formats “Refugee Voices in Canada”, which will be broadcast not only on the CBC website, but also on YouTube and TikTok to reach a younger audience. For this purpose, it is advisable for the editorial board to cooperate with local schools, universities and community centres that can provide contacts for refugees to participate in projects. In Facebook groups organised by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (n.d.), it is worth introducing new digital tools: interactive chatbots for quick answers to frequently asked questions (for example, how to apply for documents or find housing), online webinars with lawyers and labour market specialists, and weekly “live sessions” to discuss pressing issues. This can be implemented in partnership with volunteer organisations that are already actively helping migrants. Additionally, it is recommended to integrate the “success stories” functions into Facebook groups, where refugees can share their own adaptation experience. This will increase the sense of community and reduce social isolation.

In South Africa, UNHCR Help (n.d.) and Reuters (2025) focused on the coverage of protests and access to resources, while X disseminated both solidarity and discriminatory narratives. This demonstrates the need for targeted use of platforms to reduce polarisation and

strengthen practical interaction. It is recommended that Reuters create a series of investigative journalism and multimedia materials about the contribution of refugees to the socio-economic development of South Africa. For example, the category “Refugees Building South Africa” can show stories of refugee entrepreneurs, students, or doctors who have already integrated into society. For implementation, it is advisable to attract partners from local universities and business associations. On social media platform X, UNHCR (2024) should intensify its anti-hate programme through campaigns using hashtags such as #TogetherInSA or #RefugeesContribute. The campaign can involve well-known South African athletes, musicians, and bloggers to create a positive discourse. To do this, it is necessary to organise cooperation between UNHCR, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of South Africa, and cultural organisations. It would also be advisable to create special online groups on X (UNHCR, 2024) and Facebook for practical mutual assistance – for example, “Education Access SA Refugees” or “Healthcare for Migrants SA”. In these groups, users can share tips on health care, access training programmes, or starting a small business. For effective implementation, it is important to appoint moderators from among volunteers and representatives of local public organisations.

An analysis of the three countries showed that the combination of traditional media and social platforms provides the most effective support for integration. Therefore, it is necessary to create multi-level digital ecosystems, where media form public discourse, and social networks – a space for interaction and support. It is important to develop multilingual mobile applications that combine the functions of information access, interactive learning, and communication with government agencies. For example, following the example of the German Integreat (n.d.), localised versions could be created for Canada or South Africa. Implementation requires partnerships between governments, IT companies, and international organisations. In the field of professional adaptation, it is recommended to scale the LinkedIn (n.d.) experience in Germany to other countries. These can be global communities on the platform, divided by industry and country, where refugees will receive mentoring assistance from professionals. Implementation is possible through a LinkedIn (n.d.) partnership with international UNHCR programmes. It is necessary to actively use the potential of artificial intelligence to personalise integration applications. For example, systems like EMPATHIA can analyse a user’s profile and offer customised learning paths, including language courses, professional training, or psychological support counselling. The implementation of such systems requires the cooperation of government agencies with leading universities and private IT companies. It is important to implement systems for monitoring the effectiveness of integration programmes. This can be implemented through integrated data panels that track progress in training, employment, and social interaction. This requires attracting think tanks that specialise in Big Data processing.

Thus, the results of the analysis of digital platforms in Germany, Canada, and South Africa prove that the digital environment can significantly strengthen integration processes if its potential is used purposefully and in partnership between the media, government agencies, international organisations, and refugees themselves. Specific mechanisms for implementing the recommendations – from the creation of special media communities and verified online communities to the introduction of mobile applications and artificial intelligence systems – provide an opportunity for an integrated approach that covers the information, social, and economic dimensions of integration. This can not only reduce the risks of isolation and bias but also encourage the development of new social identities based on interaction, trust, and cooperation.

DISCUSSION

The use of digital platforms has played a role in the integration of migrants and the development of new social identities. Digital environments contributed to both maintaining links with the country of origin and adapting to the new socio-cultural space. Such results were consistent with the provisions highlighted by D. Abrams *et al.* (2021), who considered social identity as a dynamic category that changed under the influence of crisis conditions (in particular, the COVID-19 pandemic). With regard to migration, digital platforms have acted as a catalyst for fragmentation and simultaneously the unity, confirming the possibility of re-thinking group boundaries. The study found that digital platforms created conditions for the so-called digital place of creation, when migrants reproduced elements of the cultural environment of the country of origin in a virtual space. This was consistent with the conclusions of A. Alencar (2020), who analysed the daily practices of Venezuelan migrants in Brazil. The researcher showed that digital tools helped to overcome bureaucratic barriers, get information about work and housing, and support solidarity networks. Digital groups in social networks served not only as information channels, but also as symbolic safe spaces for preserving identity. The data also showed that interactive digital content formats (online forums, multimedia stories, chatbots) enhanced intercultural interaction between migrants and host communities. This was consistent with the conclusions of J. Anderson & V. Macleroy (2017), who described the creation of multilingual digital stories as a tool for developing new identities. Such practices have contributed to the development of cross-cultural bridges and hybrid cultural narratives. The results confirmed this approach, showing that involving migrants in creating content about themselves and their environment increased the level of self-identification and confidence in communicating with local residents.

In particular, attention was drawn to the role of social networks as tools of visibility and resistance. An analysis of digital activity showed that migrants used platforms not only for communication, but also for articulating collective rights and representing their own group. This trend coincided

with the conclusions of A. Aziz (2024), who explored the online spaces of the Rohingya diaspora. The researcher showed that social media became a space for restoring transnational identity and developing mechanisms to resist discrimination. Active users of digital platforms initiated online campaigns that influenced the political discourse in the host country. The issue of digital kinship and maintaining family ties has become particularly important. It was established that elderly migrants actively used video communication, instant messengers, and social networks to maintain psychological well-being. These results were consistent with the findings of L. Baldassar & R. Wilding (2020). The practices found in the study showed that digital platforms not only compensated for physical separation but also created a sense of continuity of family life, which was important for the development of a stable social identity. The results showed the importance of shared narratives in constructing social identity. It turned out that migrants who participated in collective online discussions were more likely to show a sense of belonging to new communities. Such data echoed the study by K. Blount-Hill (2021), who considered the theory of a common narrative regarding the interaction of citizens with government structures. As in this paper, the data confirmed that creating collective stories helped to overcome negative stereotypes and strengthen social connections. A separate area of analysis was the problem of user migration between platforms. Migrants have changed the digital environment in search of safer and more functional tools. This was consistent with the conclusions of C. Fiesler & B. Dym (2020), who described the phenomenon of online migration in fan communities. This behaviour was explained by the search for better privacy conditions, more convenient algorithms, and advanced features for language support. Algorithmic mechanisms influenced the development of migrant identities. It was recorded that users not only adapted to the recommendation systems but also tried to bypass them or change them to reflect their group more accurately. This was consistent with the findings of N. Karizat *et al.* (2021), who investigated algorithmic resistance on the TikTok platform. The conscious use of algorithms has contributed not only to the personalisation of content, but also to the expansion of opportunities for self-identification and collective mobilisation. Digital platforms contributed to the development of so-called consumer identities, when cultural and social preferences were intertwined with economic behaviour. This coincided with the study by M. Lau *et al.* (2023), who integrated the theory of planned behaviour and social identity into consumer intent models. Migrant participation in communities dedicated to goods and services has become one of the ways of social integration, creating new models of interaction with the labour market and educational services. The results of informal language learning through digital platforms aroused interest. It was found that social networks, video services, and applications contributed to faster mastery of the language of the host country. This was consistent with the conclusions of

G. Liu *et al.* (2025), who analysed the role of Xiaohongshu (RedNote) in non-formal language learning for refugees. The identified practices confirmed that access to interactive resources reduced language barriers and facilitated integration into professional and educational environments. Thus, the results obtained indicated the multidimensional influence of digital platforms on integration processes. These platforms provided support for cultural heritage, transnational ties, and psychological stability. They helped to adapt to new social conditions, form identities and expand opportunities for participation in public life. In some aspects, the results went beyond the scope of previous studies, showing not only the information and communication, but also the structure-creating function of digital platforms, when new communities emerged in the virtual space, and only then turned into physical interaction.

This combination was consistent with trends identified in studies by J. Marlowe (2020), who noted that social networks have become tools for maintaining connections between displaced persons and platforms for organising interaction with local communities. The revealed possibility of combining “old” and “new” identities in the digital environment confirmed the opinion of S. Ponzanesi & K. Leurs (2022) that digital migration was expressed in the daily practices of users who reproduced and rethought social roles and cultural codes. The active use of platforms has contributed to strengthening cross-cultural contacts and expanding opportunities for self-identification. This effect was consistent with the findings of E. Swartz *et al.* (2022), who emphasised that the digital environment opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and simultaneously strengthened the role of personal initiative in shaping new communities. It was established that the mechanisms of social support on the platforms acquired the features of non-formal education, information resources, instructions for adaptation were distributed, and informal mentoring took place. A similar effect was observed by H. Ritchie (2022), who discussed the creation of digital platforms by Somali refugee women in Kenya to support integration and competence development. Digital platforms were not neutral environments; they influenced the distribution of statuses, resources, and access to information. This was consistent with the analysis by I. Qureshi *et al.* (2020), who described the phenomenon of social media polarisation (SMIP) as a consequence of algorithmic content selection. As part of the study, the risks of forming limited information fields were also traced, which complicated the integration process, since some migrants interacted mainly with diaspora networks and had less contact with the local population.

Studying the dynamics of self-identification showed that digital platforms acted as tools for flexibly combining multiple cultural codes. A similar trend was traced by A. Takhar *et al.* (2023) in a study of the third generation of British Sikhs, where Instagram served as a space for constructing imagined identities. Parallels with these data indicated that even in conditions of forced resettlement

(refugees, labour migrants), digital environments provided an opportunity for self-organisation and modelling of new identities. The mechanisms identified in the study to support cultural heritage in the digital environment reflected the trends described by I. Pugra *et al.* (2025), who analysed the role of traditional food in constructing Indonesian social identity. Recorded examples showed that migrants actively used online groups to discuss traditional practices, cuisines, and rituals, which supported cultural continuity and promoted cross-cultural exchange. This showed that digital environments were becoming repositories of cultural heritage, which confirmed the provisions of E. Rushton & M. Reiss (2021). A separate layer of results concerned the experience of reverse cultural adaptation and loss of social identity in the event of return or displacement. Parallels with the study by R. Raja *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that international students in China experienced complex identity transformations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital platforms can mitigate these processes by providing contact with various social groups and restoring a sense of belonging. The analysis of discursive practices showed that digital platforms became not only technical channels, but also environments for political and economic positioning. The identified cases correlated with the studies by M. Seoane (2020) and S. Yilmaz (2023), who proposed the concept of inclusive globalisation. This showed that migrants not only consumed content but also became participants in global economic and political processes through online networks, forming collective identities in the context of new market and information landscapes.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that digital platforms and media resources have become key tools for refugee social integration in Germany, Canada, and South Africa. It was stated that online communities, social networks and news portals provide information support, contribute to reducing social isolation, form a sense of belonging and provide opportunities for professional and cultural development. The content analysis showed that the media disseminate both analytical materials and practical advice on education, employment, and access to social services, which creates conditions for the effective adaptation of refugees in host societies. In Germany, the digital platforms X and LinkedIn allowed refugees to receive up-to-date news, learn about government initiatives, and share experience and professional advice. It was found that users actively commented on news, shared their integration stories, and offered contacts and courses for professional development. The news portals Der Spiegel and Bild covered the challenges of adaptation, in particular, language barriers and problems in the labour market, thereby forming an understanding of the needs of refugees in society. In Canada, CBC and Facebook migrant groups performed a similar function, providing access to information about documents, housing, education, and social services. Analysis of the comments showed that the refugees actively exchanged practical advice, created new

social contacts, and supported each other in the process of adaptation. Social networks served as a platform for mutual support, discussion of cultural characteristics and joint search for solutions to everyday problems, which contributed to the development of new social identities.

In South Africa, the media platforms UNHCR Help and Reuters reported on the social and legal problems of refugees, access to education, healthcare, and social support. The X social network was used to discuss local and global integration practices, spread success stories, and discuss adaptation challenges. Users discussed employment opportunities and access to resources, which demonstrated active interaction and solidarity. This showed that digital platforms are an effective channel of communication and support, contributing to the development of stable social connections and new cultural codes. The obtained qualitative results showed that the platforms perform a complex role: they simultaneously provide information, social and cultural support, promote the development of independent planning skills, and professional adaptation. Quantitative indicators of user activity and platform coverage confirmed the high level of refugee involvement and the importance of digital tools in overcoming social isolation.

The recommendations developed in the course of the study include ensuring equal access of refugees to digital platforms, active use of mobile applications and online courses for language and professional adaptation, and the use of social networks as channels for sharing experience and forming professional contacts. It is advisable to

establish cooperation with local communities and public organisations to integrate online resources with offline support. The use of monitoring systems allows evaluating the effectiveness of integration programmes and adjusting them according to the needs of users.

The limitations of the study were that the analysis covered only three countries, which makes it impossible to fully generalise the results at the global level. Quantitative data reflected overall activity without detailing the duration or depth of platform usage. In addition, some of the activity occurred in closed groups or private messages that remained outside the study area. The prospects for further research include expanding the geography of analysis to other countries, evaluating the long-term results of integration through digital platforms, and investigating the impact of media and social media use on the psychological well-being of migrants. A separate area is an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of digital tools in the development of professional and social ties, which will improve integration strategies in host countries.

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