



TECHNOLOGY FEATURE

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Behind the Screen: The Hidden Power Shaping What We See

Social media doesn't expose the whole picture to us, but just a little version of it. It is optimized, filtered and customized according to user actions and usage. So, the question arises: Does social media control or blur our vision so that we cannot see the whole perspective?

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Introduction

We use social media apps like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok to see content. We search for anything we want to see and feel like we can use these platforms by our own choice, but the reality is quite different. Every click we do, every like, comment and search, our watch time to any specific video, all this get recorded and analyze throughout the process, and this data is used to make our feeds personalized according to our interests and beliefs.

In 2026, social media is not just a tool, but a weapon to shape our mindsets. It only shows content to users about what they believe and hides the other part of the story. Basically, the algorithm bound the users in their own "bubble", they can't see anything else outside that bubble. Because these apps tend to keep the users staying for a longer period of time without any realization that they get addicted, as when they see content of their type, they become so comfortable watching it that they do endless scrolling.

But the question here is: Are we using social media or is social media using us to only see one side of the story and blur the other?

"Algorithms don't just show content—they decide what reality looks like for you."

Technology Overview

Algorithms are mainly rules or set of instructions that are designed to collect the data, see user behavior and make decisions. It sets a system where everyone has personalized user experiences based on their interest or what they usually interact with.

Every step or interaction users perform will affect their future content. For example, if a user watches a movie, then after some time another movie of a similar type will appear in his suggestions. This way, these platforms increase engagement and provide content that is perfectly aligns with user preferences.



Figure 1: A visual representation of how social media algorithms personalize and limit user experiences. Credit: AI generated.

Key Findings & Impact

The main goal of algorithms is not just organizing the data but to increase the engagement and attention of users so that they spend most of their time in scrolling at ease without realizing that they are trapped in a bubble.

These algorithms' goal is to make their user so drenched in their own interest and preferences that they don't feel the need to go outside that bubble. As a result, they gradually limit their exposure to diverse viewpoints and only believes that their perspective is right, according to the content they consume.

For example, if someone likes to watch horror movies, then they never get any funny movies in their feed or someone who watches political content never gets any content against their political party. All this Leads to a narrow and biased understanding of reality.

Moreover, consuming the same content repeatedly can reduce their critical thinking and their ability to think beyond the nutshell, eventually they got addicted to those platforms because they support their thinking.

Another major issue is the rapid spread of misinformation. Anything that has more engagement goes viral, even if it is fake, that Influence the public opinion.

What's Next?

The internet itself is neither bad nor good but it completely depends on its usage. We should use these platforms with responsibility and awareness.

To break this system, users should engage with all kind of content and should explore diverse content. This reshaped system suggestions and preferences.



About the Author

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