

ALGORITHMS AND THEIR ROLE IN  
CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL MEDIA BUSINESS

# TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

*LESSON 3*



## ***A little reminder:***

Algorithm is an **advanced mathematical computer program**.

The algorithm systems are embedded programs that analyze **past user data and search history in combination with other users' searches and history** to calculate digital outcomes, anticipate possible recommendations, and present consumers with feeds that represent their own unique immersive media environments.

Overall, **the goal** of the algorithmic feed or search results **is to create a media environment that best suits each user's preferences**.



## ***Definitions to remember:***

**Dataveillance** – is part of modern digital advertising methods that are interested in how to balance and integrate marketing into media. The more cumulative the data acquired, the more accurate the suggestion to users, and the more likely the user stays on the platform and makes informed consumption decisions.


**Psychographics** – data collected are combined to create personality profiles. Organizes user data into behaviors. To encourage more intentional and civic use on digital media platforms, users should actively consider how information is collected and quantized to build these psychographics.

**The Era of Judging Machines** – with that phrase sociologist Zeynep Tufekci explains the era in what we live. That algorithms are like machines what calculate not just how to quickly sort a database, or perform a mathematical calculation, but to decide what is “best”, “relevant”, “appropriate”, or “harmful” to users.

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# ***What is the difference between traditional media and media based on algorithms?***





In comparison to media ecology, the algorithm exceeds the screen interaction of the user. Algorithms create feeds based on combinations of thousands of inputs from the larger audience and the specific user actions both on and off the platform.

Considering the algorithm as a media environment means to come to an understanding that future platform interactions will disregard legacy consumption methods of collective, meaning mass, media ecologies and move beyond traditional media literacy approaches to deconstruction and analysis.

**The algorithmic media environment is a custom, unique environment that changes as the user changes, but also with the culture surrounding the user.** This is a massive shift in how media is experienced by the many as media is distributed both massively and uniquely.



While reading a newspaper or consuming television, the viewer is unable to shift the content from the platform level. **The reader could turn the page or change the channel, but the content is pre-determined by the publisher or the channel.**

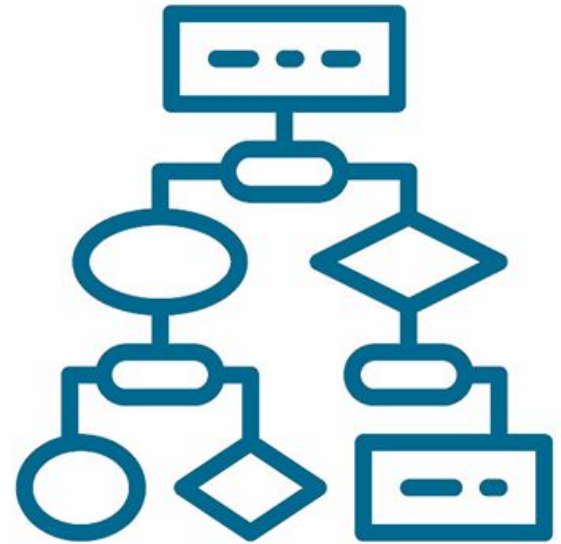
By reacting to an article or a television show, the next page or the following program does not automatically change - it's static and predetermined.

While the choices may shift over a period of months or years, the content shift would require subscribers to make conscious consumption choices of unsubscribing or changing providers.

In the digital platform space, a choice made on a piece of content changes the material almost immediately following the action.

If a user is on the news app on their mobile device, they may notice the short load time as they scroll. Within those few milliseconds, the feed has shifted, albeit slightly, to accommodate the user's likely desires.

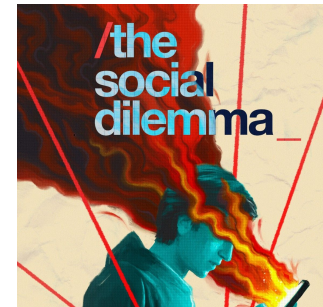
Within just a few hours of using an app like Twitter, Netflix, Facebook, or the news app, the feed is customized to the user, based on the choices of what was read, ignored, or reacted to, and combined with the aforementioned collected data in physical spaces. The user is reproduced in their own media environment.



## ***Movies about algorithm impact:***

**The Great Hack** – 2019 documentary film about the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal. Explore how a data company named Cambridge Analytica came to symbolize the dark side of social media in the wake of the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Shows how company can manipulate through algorithms and public relations.

**The Social Dilemma** – focuses on how big social media companies manipulate users by using algorithms that encourage addiction to their platforms. It also shows, fairly accurately, how platforms harvest personal data to target users with ads – and have so far gone largely unregulated.








## **Algorithmic Awareness**


**YOU ARE THE CONSUMER**  
**YOU ARE THE PRODUCT**



Algorithmic awareness can be defined as **a mental state in which individuals notice the occurrence of invisible technological processes regulated by algorithms and their impact on how the same users consume and experience content.**

Algorithmic awareness is associated with the concepts of “data assemblage” and “algorithmic visibility”, and is focused on understanding:

- how individual elements of the technological and social system affect the production, circulation and experience of content;
- what determines the visibility of content on the internet;
- how the visible depends on the designed system, what factors determine this design;
- what user activities are regulated by algorithms;
- what actions the user can take to make something visible to algorithms and systems.



The technological infrastructure used to collect data and direct personalised content based on it is in turn called. It consists of several technologies used to track, target, optimise and automate the message in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of commercial and political advertising.

Just as mass media has exercised social control by closely supervising the process of creating and distributing content, becoming tools of “narrative transmission”, so now companies selling products or services can do so thanks to data collected about users, gaining access to a very large amount of information not only about consumer, political, religious preferences, but also to **WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, HOW and WITH WHO** users consume digital content.



## References & Links

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