



Transformations of Influence in the Network Society: A Sociological Approach to Digital Capital Among Digital Influencers

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Abstract

This research looks into how the digital world is transforming the notion of social influence among people in today's societies. This research project demonstrates that all of the sources of influence have changed from being predominantly based upon traditional forms of social hierarchy and in-person institutions to being based exclusively on the ever-changing, interactive nature of these new online venues. Therefore, the author studies digital capital as a new source of social power through measuring online presence, connection with an audience, and level of visibility on each respective platform. Digital influencers are highlighted as emerging social actors gaining authority in contemporary society based not only on their original foundation of followers but also based on the digital capital that they maintain via digital economy platforms. Furthermore, the author employs a sociological analysis to examine how these changes may produce 'Open' opportunities or 'Reproduce' new forms of inequality throughout society today as well as proposing that traditional sociological theories should be reviewed and modified as a result of the many digital changes occurring in current modern societies.

Keywords: Network Society; Digital Capital; Digital Influencers.

INTRODUCTION

Modern communities have experienced fast and deep changes because information communication technology systems keep expanding at a rapid pace. These technologies function as more than basic technical instruments because they establish a structural system which modifies how people connect with each other and how they create meaning and who gains power in social settings. The network society has developed into a contemporary social structure which connects people and organizations through multiple digital systems that operate with adaptable and unrestricted access. The process enables social relations to develop into new forms which surpass their conventional patterns.

The structural changes have created a complete transformation in social influence which now extends beyond its previous connection to social positions and formal organizational ties. The process now depends on how digital spaces shape presence while audiences can interact with



content creators who produce material that viewers want to share. The process of influence now operates through multiple channels which combine technical components with communicative elements, and cultural aspects in a complex system.

The social transformation created a new social group which includes digital influencers who represent the most visible social actor changes in contemporary digital communities. These people have reached a top position in the networked environment because they use what we call digital capital to achieve their success. The system operates through a capital structure which depends on having many followers who determine the platform's value through their engagement activities and their ability to draw attention and their content management skills. The transformation process brings two major changes to media systems. It establishes new media structures and transfers social power from conventional institutions to interactive digital platforms.

The changes should enable more people to join while they will transform how society functions. The digital environment produces essential social science questions because it determines who holds power and which digital platforms should we trust for which purposes, and how power continues to exist in digital systems. The new networked structure creates fresh social inequalities because digital capital distribution follows competitive market principles which depend on algorithm-based diffusion systems.

In light of the foregoing, this study seeks to analyze the transformations of influence within network society from a sociological perspective by focusing on the concept of digital capital as the analytical framework upon which this study relies to understand the position of digital influencers in modern societies, the mechanisms through which their influence over social actors who follow them is formed, as well as the limits of this influence and its prospects in reshaping patterns of social agency. Accordingly, this study aims to enrich serious debates that seek to develop tools of sociological analysis in ways that align with the specificity of the digital environment, thereby enabling a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the transformations experienced by societies in the contemporary era.

Study Problem

Contemporary digital transformations have brought about fundamental changes in the nature of social agency within network society, such that social influence is no longer governed by the traditional possession of knowledge or institutional status as in conventional societies, but has become linked to digital presence and the management of interaction within dynamic and multi-level networks.

The digital environment transforms social action from a process concentrated within institutions into networked communicative action, whereby individuals can participate in the production of meaning and influence without the need for institutional mediation (Abdulrahman, 2018, p. 65).

Manuel Castells emphasizes that social agency in network society depends on the ability to control information flows within digital networks, enabling digital actors to reproduce their social position and enhance their influence (Castells, 2013, p. 45).



Crystal Abidin clarifies that digital capital is not limited to the number of followers, but also includes the ability to create sustained interaction and manage public attention, which grants digital actors additional legitimacy within networks (Abidin, 2018, p. 88).

Finally, Burrell and Fourcade indicate that digital algorithms directly influence the ranking of content and the ways it reaches audiences, which reinforces disparities in effectiveness among influencers and reproduces power relations within the network society through invisible mechanisms (Burrell & Fourcade, 2021, p. 220).

Based on these studies, the problem of digital transformations becomes evident, in that they have not only changed the media and tools used in influence but have also reformulated the foundations of social agency, the ways digital capital is distributed, and the nature of recognition of actors within networks. This compels us, as sociological researchers, to attempt to study and investigate the mechanisms that enable digital influencers to strengthen their presence and impact within a changing and sustainable networked environment.

Accordingly, the central problem of this study is defined through the following question: How have digital transformations reshaped social agency and the production of digital capital among digital influencers within the network society?

Sub-questions:

- What are the mechanisms for building digital capital among digital influencers, and how can this be translated into social agency?
- How do strategies of self-presentation and digital interaction contribute to granting influencers absolute legitimacy within digital networks?
- What is the role of algorithms and the logic of the attention economy in the distribution of digital capital and influencers' impact on audiences?

1. Theoretical Framework of the Study Concepts

1.1 Network Society:

The concept of the network society is considered one of the modern concepts associated with the digital transformation experienced by societies in the present time, and it constitutes a fundamental analytical framework for understanding the transformations produced by the digital revolution in the social structure in general. The concept of the network society refers to a new pattern of social organization based primarily on interconnected social networks of individuals and institutions, where information, resources, and knowledge become available instantaneously and across traditional boundaries, thereby redefining power, influence, and social interaction (Castells, 2010, p. 500).

Castells further confirms in his study that these networks do not function merely as tools and means of communication, but rather represent a fundamental social structure that determines the dynamics of agency and influence between social influencers and virtual followers, such that position within the network and the ability to manage information flows become more important than traditional positioning within institutions (Castells, 2013, p. 45).



On the other hand, Jan van Dijk indicates that the network society creates an environment characterized by flexibility and openness, where individuals can transcend traditional hierarchical structures and participate in the reproduction of meaning and social agency through digital interactions (Van Dijk, 2020, p. 28).

1.2 Digital Capital

The concept of digital capital is closely associated with that of the network society, as it represents the social and symbolic resources possessed by the individual or influencer within digital networks, which enable them to exercise influence and obtain recognition from social actors (Abidin, 2018, p. 88).

It should be noted that digital capital encompasses multiple elements, including:

- The number of followers and the ability to reach a wide audience.
- The level of interaction related to the number of likes, the volume of comments, and the extent of sharing.
- The ability to produce engaging content with broad dissemination across multiple digital media.

Thomas Davenport and John Beck describe digital capital as a resource which directly connects to the attention economy because in the network society organizations must use their audience attention as their core strategic asset to achieve social success (Davenport & Beck, 2001, p. 35).

Research investigations have shown that digital algorithms represent the main element which determines how this particular type of capital will either grow or shrink. These algorithms decide which content becomes available to wide audiences, thus allowing people in social networks to control their social influence (Burrell & Fourcade, 2021, p. 220).

1.3 Digital Influencers:

Digital influencers function as leading examples of social control which network society members use to connect with each other. These people know how to change their viewers' feelings and actions through what they post online. Their agency derives from digital capital, as their presence within networks, the degree of interaction with their audiences, and strategies of digital self-presentation all determine their level of influence (Abidin, 2018, p. 88).

Theresa Senft explains that influencers use specific digital impression management techniques to build their credibility and maintain symbolic closeness with their followers, which leads to their ability to transform digital capital into social power (Senft, 2008, p. 40).

Ahmed Youssef Ahmed shows that digital influencers establish complex interactive systems which let them speak directly to their followers while building emotional and social connections that form the basis of their operational approach. The network society has undergone a complete change in how social agency operates within it (Ahmed, 2022, p. 156).

The previous concepts form the essential building blocks of this study's analytical framework because they demonstrate how social agency continues to exist in digital environments. The



concepts operate together as individual components, which reveal multiple aspects of how present-day society undergoes structural changes.

The network society functions as the social system which enables digital agency to connect with influence mechanisms. People now understand social structures through digital networks, which spread information throughout open spaces that create social recognition. The concept enables researchers to study how social and symbolic resources transform structurally while showing how people and organizations operate in a network system, which breaks through typical social and authority-based limits. The network society functions as the core structure which supports all new social agency operations and serves as the base for digital capital accumulation.

The concept of digital capital, in turn, represents the strategic resource that determines the capacity of the digital actor to exert influence within this networked framework. It is not limited to the mere number of followers, but also includes the ability to attract attention, produce widely disseminated content, and manage audience interaction. This concept makes it possible to analyze social agency as the outcome of an interrelated relationship between digital resources and individual practice, and clarifies how digital networks are transformed into a space for reproducing social value on a new basis founded on interaction and dissemination rather than traditional social position.

Digital influencers, meanwhile, are the actors who translate this strategic resource into tangible social agency. They constitute the point of intersection between the network structure and digital capital, as their influence depends on their ability to manage digital presence, build interactive relationships with their audiences, and invest digital platforms to maximize the dissemination of their content. Consequently, studying these actors makes it possible to understand how digital capital is transformed into effective social practice, how new forms of digital recognition emerge, and what this entails in terms of the redistribution of social agency within network society.

Through the sociological approach adopted in this study, analyzing the interaction between network structures, digital resources, and actors enables an understanding of the complex dynamics of social agency. It also allows for distinguishing between different levels of influence, from the level of the general network structure, to the level of individual resources (digital capital), and ultimately to the practical level of influence exercised through digital influencers. From this perspective, the theoretical treatment of these concepts constitutes a coherent framework for studying structural transformations in digital society and for understanding how social recognition and agency are reproduced within open and evolving spaces.

2. Mechanisms for Building Digital Capital Among Digital Influencers and Its Transformation into Social Agency

Social influence in network society is no longer linked to social position or the traditional possession of knowledge, but has become contingent upon actors' ability to build digital capital that enables them to achieve an influential presence within networks. The process of capital construction serves as the basic entry point to study how digital period social agency has evolved.



Digital capital functions as a capital extension which follows Pierre Bourdieu's original capital concept but shows up in digital-specific forms that operate through social interaction and information distribution, and digital audience reach to produce social worth (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248). The value of digital capital extends past follower numbers because it develops through an intricate process which combines technical elements with social and cultural aspects:

- The Audience Building Mechanism operates as a fundamental system which supports digital capital because digital influencers work to grow their followers through their ongoing content development which matches what their viewers want to see. The process relies on more than just audience numbers because it requires both high-quality target groups and their active participation. Studies indicate that the true value of digital capital lies in the "engaged audience" rather than the "numerical audience." (Abidin, 2018, p. 88).
- The basic indicator which shows digital capital strength comes from Digital Interaction through likes and comments, and shares. The process of content sharing across various digital platforms demonstrates content distribution but the system also enhances content reach through algorithms. These give priority to content that users actively engage with. Digital recognition functions as a form of digital acknowledgment which allows digital social actors to achieve special network society status through their interaction.
- The process of producing shareable content (viral content) requires influencers to implement strategies which create simple and clear content that grabs viewer attention according to digital platform operational principles. Digital culture depends on content sharing and distribution according to Henry Jenkins who identifies content flow as its essential value system (Jenkins, 2006, p. 03).
- The process of digital capital development requires continuous network presence instead of occasional content creation because this approach allows for stronger and more stable audience connections. Abdelrahman Azzī indicates that agency in the network society is based on "interactive continuity," which ensures that the actor remains within spheres of influence (Abdulrahman, 2018, p. 72).
- The process of digital capital formation and construction determines its value but its real worth stems from its ability to create actual social power. Digital capital contains the potential to influence but it does not function as direct influence until someone applies it to shape how audiences view things and how they respond both online and offline. The transformation process operates through three connected levels which exist within this structure:
- The first level operates through symbolic influence which enables influencers to transform how their audience understands things by using new perspectives and showing them through particular situations.



- The second level: the level of interactive influence, where the audience shifts from being a recipient to a participant in the production of meaning, thereby enhancing the dissemination and circulation of ideas.
- The third level: the level of behavioral influence, where the impact of influencers extends to changing consumption patterns or social attitudes, reflecting the transformation of digital capital into an effective social force.

Manuel Castells confirms that agency in the network society is linked to the capacity to influence information flows, not merely to produce them, meaning that the real power of influence lies in controlling the trajectories of influence within networks (Castells, *Communication Power*, 2013, p. 45).

Digital capital functions as the primary system which enables social agency reproduction during the digital age because influence now depends on digital network investment, interaction management, and digital presence conversion into network social impact rather than traditional resource, and knowledge, and information possession.

3. Strategies of Self Presentation and Digital Interaction as a Basis for Acquiring Legitimacy within the Network Society

If digital capital enables influencers to establish a presence within networks, this presence does not acquire social significance nor does it translate into actual influence unless it is supported by a form of digital legitimacy. Influence, in its essence, is not based solely on reach and expansion, but also on the degree of acceptance and recognition within the network society. It depends on the ability of the actor to be perceived as a reliable source or a credible reference within the digital space.

In this context, legitimacy within the network society is not granted in a ready-made or institutional manner as in previously established traditional contexts. Rather, it is constructed gradually through daily interactive practices, foremost among them digital self-presentation and the management of relationships with the audience. Understanding this legitimacy therefore requires analyzing how influencers reproduce their selves within the digital space and how they succeed in transforming this presentation into a source of recognition.

Within this framework, influencers do not present themselves as formal actors or traditional experts, but as individuals close to their audience, sharing details of their daily lives and expressing their experiences in a personal manner. This mode of presentation constitutes a strategic dimension adopted by influencers to attract the largest possible number of followers. This practice aims to create a form of symbolic proximity that makes the relationship between influencer and follower appear as a strong personal relationship, despite taking place within a digital context far removed from the personal boundaries of individuals. In this regard, Theresa Senft explains that this form of presentation falls within what may be termed "digital impression management", whereby the social actor or digital influencer seeks to construct a coherent, attractive, and flawless image in



order to strengthen their presence and influence on others within the digital space (Senft, 2008, p. 40).

However, this process does not stop at the level of self presentation alone, but extends to the management of interaction with the audience, which represents the second dimension in building digital legitimacy. The influencer does not merely produce content, but also seeks to create a form of continuous interaction with followers through responding to comments, posing questions, or involving the audience in content production. This interaction not only enhances the dissemination of content, but also creates a form of communicative integration in which the follower feels part of the process rather than merely a passive recipient.

In this context, scientific studies indicate that this interactive relationship produces what is known as "parasocial relationships", where audiences develop a sense of attachment to the influencer despite the absence of a direct relationship in real life (Abidin, 2018, p. 88).

Sociologists view this relationship pattern as a digital social bond, which operates through symbolic communication instead of physical closeness or organizational ties. This type of relationship can be viewed as a reconfiguration of the concept of social bonding itself within the digital space. Social integration now depends on symbolic communication through digital platforms instead of physical location or traditional social group membership. Digital influencers create content, which enables them to build an "imagined social presence" that allows them to maintain continuous audience engagement through emotional and symbolic connections. This results in a new way of social interaction through indirect communication.

Digital platforms have evolved into social bond reproduction areas, which operate beyond their standard operational boundaries because users establish strong symbolic and visual connections that make up for the lack of direct physical contact. These relationships contain a unique power to affect others because they allow people to direct where others focus their attention while they form beliefs, which follow social acceptance patterns that exist in network-based communities.

The digital presence exists with consistent patterns, which help organizations establish their legitimacy. The influencer who keeps showing up and talks to followers now and then builds an image of being someone people can trust to depend on. Abdelrahman Azzi explains that actors in network society gain agency through their power to stay connected to interaction networks because disappearing from these networks leads to losing their network position (Abdulrahman, 2018, p. 72).

Digital legitimacy develops from two main factors, which include influencer content creation and audience response to their content. Users demonstrate their acceptance of the discourse through their actions of liking and commenting, which serve as indicators of collective recognition. The network society operates through "negotiated" legitimacy because influencers need to work continuously with their audience to build their legitimacy instead of having a permanent or fixed status.

The digital influencers encounter competition when they try to establish their digital legitimacy. Users face ongoing evaluation and comparison through an interactive environment, which



monitors their social presence using both numerical data and qualitative information about their follower count, their content distribution, and their audience interaction levels. The network-based digital legitimacy system shows instability because actors can quickly gain or lose their digital status based on their network performance and audience engagement skills.

The present competitive environment has led to rising conflicts, which now involve influencers who compete against each other. Content improvement and interaction strategy development represent the basic conflict, but certain situations lead to harmful symbolic actions, which include efforts to harm competitor brands through reputation attacks and credibility reduction for personal digital audience growth. The digital domain functions as an area where symbolic authority battles occur beneath the surface because people gain status through their skills and original ideas, but they also use indirect methods to transform how viewers see things and their emotional attachment to networks, which evolve quickly.

People in network society establish their legitimacy through strategic self-presentation and digital interaction, which operate as social mechanisms. The virtual relationships between people have established new standards, which determine digital influencer legitimacy through audience interaction instead of traditional institutional systems.

These influencers build their legitimacy through their daily activities, which involve personal interactions and symbolic closeness and digital presence management instead of depending on established authority. The way social agency operates has undergone a complete transformation. The process of legitimacy formation now takes place through evolving network-based interactive connections instead of receiving official authorization from higher authorities.

4. Algorithms and the Logic of the Attention Economy in the Redistribution of Digital Capital and Influence

Social agency in network society depends on digital capital ownership and audience, interactive legitimacy development, but influencers cannot direct their influence path in its entirety. The digital environment operates through human social interactions, but its content distribution depends on the exact mathematical systems which algorithms use to control what users encounter in their network connections.

The research field needs to study digital influencer impact through analysis of their operational framework instead of studying their individual actions. The creation of influence within network society emerges from the combined effects which actors produce through their actions. Their ability to interact with algorithms and their audience responses also matters.

Digital platforms use algorithmic mediation to rank and direct content through their specific criteria which include user interactions, viewing time, and interest patterns according to recent literature. The process of content distribution depends on more than just its natural worth because algorithms determine what gets shown in the digital world (Gillespie, 2018, p. 75).

The attention economy functions as a core element which enables technical mediation to operate because users must fight for digital attention, which serves as their most valuable resource. The



digital era has made attention into a marketable asset which Thomas Davenport and John Beck describe as being generated and managed through established economic systems. The ability to draw audience focus serves as the essential requirement which enables people to gain social power through digital platforms (Davenport & Beck, 2001, p. 35).

The perspective shows that algorithms function as active systems which operate within the symbolic economic system instead of working as unbiased technical instruments. The system organizes content distribution based on its ability to draw users and create user engagement. The system selects content which reaches the highest number of viewers through its digital appeal instead of assessing the intellectual or social worth of the material. Digital influencers must adapt their content production methods to meet algorithmic requirements because these systems determine their success through different elements including visual presentation and content themes.

Accordingly, the spread of certain types of content across digital platforms, such as highly emotional content, controversial material, or rapidly consumable content, for example, can be interpreted as a direct result of a complex interaction between the logic of the attention economy on the one hand and mechanisms of algorithmic direction on the other. This interaction reshapes not only the nature of content, but also patterns of reception and interaction within the network society.

The current research demonstrates that algorithms maintain social inequalities through network society systems by creating visible nodes, which enable social interactions with specific users, while concealing other users. The distribution of digital capital follows an unjust pattern because the system operates through a selective mechanism which combines both technical and commercial standards to determine allocation (Burrell & Fourcade, 2021, p. 220).

The social transformation represents a change in human action because people now follow pre-established algorithms instead of using their own free will. The actor faces total loss of control regarding their visibility and diffusion conditions because an unseen system restricts their ability to influence things. The social process contains algorithms which function as hidden actors to establish the course of social interactions.

The situation creates a new problem which requires understanding how influencers connect with their followers. The relationship between content creators and their audience has transformed into an indirect connection because algorithms now control what content people will see and when they will see it. How they will experience it. The process of influence operates as a complex system which goes beyond simple influencer-follower interactions because it operates within an intricate network of technological platforms.

The attention economy logic makes influencers follow particular tactics to preserve their network status through methods which include posting more content, creating short videos, and using strong emotional content. These approaches help content reach its target audience, but they create a situation where content becomes standardized because easily shareable material takes precedence over content which requires deep analysis.



The digital environment according to Zizi Papacharissi has created "affective publics" which function through emotional interactions to shape user interactions, thus making emotional content the dominant force on social media platforms. The network society depends on two essential elements for influence which include logical arguments and methods to create emotional reactions (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 27).

The attention economy functions through algorithms which serve as more than basic technical systems to reshape how people act in network society. The system establishes conditions which determine what content users can view while setting rules for content distribution and methods to affect others. This results in digital capital redistribution between users and transforms how people influence each other.

Digital influencer impact arises from three essential elements which include their content creation, their ability to create social interactions, and the algorithmic distribution of their content. Social agency in the digital era exists as a combined entity which merges social elements with technological components to study human behavior through technology and human interaction systems.

5. Applied Models of Transformations of Influence in the Network Society, A Sociological Approach

The transition from the theoretical level to the analysis of applied models is not merely a procedural step for the purpose of clarification or illustration, but represents a fundamental analytical moment with an epistemological dimension. It allows for testing sociological concepts within their actual social contexts and understanding the ways in which the structures of the network society and digital capital are embodied in everyday practice. Concepts, regardless of their theoretical precision, acquire full significance only through observing their manifestations in the transforming social reality, where technical, symbolic, and interactive dimensions intersect.

Within this framework, digital influencers do not appear as a homogeneous social category or a single model of agency, but rather as multiple and evolving social configurations. Their patterns of digital presence vary according to the volume of digital capital they possess, the strategies of interaction they adopt, and the degree of their integration into platform logic and algorithmic mechanisms. Each of these models reflects a particular form of the reproduction of influence within the digital space and simultaneously reveals deeper transformations affecting the overall structure of symbolic power in contemporary society.

Accordingly, the analysis of these applied models does not aim merely to describe individual cases, but to deconstruct broader social dynamics related to the reconfiguration of mechanisms of recognition, the production of legitimacy, and the distribution of influence within the network society. This enables an understanding of the structural transformations that have redefined the concept of the social actor in the digital age.



5.1 The Knowledge Influencer Model: Reconfiguring Epistemic Legitimacy in the Digital Space

The knowledge influencer represents a major shift which reshapes how knowledge emerges and moves through society because of networked social systems. Academic institutions together with scientific elites no longer hold exclusive control over knowledge because open digital spaces now allow knowledge to develop and change. The knowledge influencer works as an intermediary who makes knowledge easier to understand before sharing it through digital platforms, which offer quick and interactive communication. The model achieves its sociological importance because it establishes new ways to determine which sources hold value for gaining knowledge. The current system bases its legitimacy on academic qualifications and institutional connections, but it now depends on how well people can connect with others and generate social engagement. This leads to network-based content distribution. The process described by Pierre Bourdieu shows how cultural capital transforms into digital capital through the network-based system, which preserves knowledge in accordance with its own operational principles. The process of knowledge dissemination through this system creates challenges because knowledge must follow a simplified distribution system, which could transform its content through non-academic selection methods (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

5.2 The Social Value Influencer Model: Influence on Representations and the Reproduction of Meaning

The social value influencer serves as the main actor who transforms network society through their work of creating social understanding instead of simply sharing information. The model operates through communication strategies which establish symbolic connections with audiences by combining personal stories with emotional dialogues to boost both audience identification and message reception.

The public sphere underwent a transformation which allows sociologists to study how people exercise their agency through this new form of social interaction that combines logical discussions with emotional digital network connections. Social influence now operates through emotional activation which creates symbolic connections with audiences that reshape social values and norms beyond established institutional systems (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 15).

5.3 The Consumer Influencer Model: Transforming Digital Capital into Economic Value

The consumer influencer represents the most visible way which social and economic elements merge within network society because digital capital transforms into economic resources, which people use to guide their purchasing decisions. The influencer in this model works beyond content creation to establish audience trust, which drives their buying choices through market-based recommendation systems that seem like personal advice. The way people watch content has evolved into a new form of indirect influence, which uses interactive methods to create symbolic connections between creators and their audience. The attention economy theory explains how



value emerges because businesses need user focus to generate worth. The model creates sociological problems because it shows how influencer credibility reaches its limits and how their connection with followers depends on market-driven exchange systems (Davenport & Beck, 2001, p. 35).

5.4 The Algorithmic Influencer Model: Social Agency Under Platform Dominance

The algorithmic influencer model shows social agency has undergone a major change because it now depends on an unseen technical system which algorithms represent. Instead of depending on the actor's personal abilities, digital platforms establish rules which determine content distribution and influence patterns by assessing user engagement and content distribution speed and content sharing capabilities, so influencers need to modify their approaches to survive in this environment. The concept of social agency becomes "algorithmically framed" because the system applies rules which establish the boundaries through which actors can display themselves and affect their surroundings in the network. Digital platforms serve as major content ranking systems, which direct user content selection, so these platforms emerge as primary factors that determine content influence. The distribution of digital capital becomes uneven because influence stems from the complex relationship between human actions and the built-in technological systems (Gillespie, 2018, p. 75).

5.5 The Political or Protest Influencer Model: Reshaping Political Action in the Networked Space

The political or protest influencer demonstrates how political activities have moved from official institutions to digital networks which people now use to spread information and shape public discussions. The influencer in this model operates beyond position transmission because they help to establish issue frameworks, which guide public discussions through their ability to spread information rapidly in digital spaces. The public sphere underwent a transformation which sociologists describe as a new open space that includes multiple actors who engage in overlapping discussions. The agency operates with quick response times, but its limited duration makes it difficult to determine if it can create long-term social changes.

5.6 The Identity Influencer Model: Producing and Commodifying the Self within the Network Society

The identity influencer produces major changes which affect how people understand their own identity and their relationships with others in the network society because digital environments enable users to generate endless identity content. People exchange information during interactions, but they also use these interactions to build their personal identity according to rules which match what their audience needs. The model demonstrates how personal experiences transform into digital content which users share with others, thus creating a new practice of "self-commodification" on social media platforms. Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp state that social



reality in the present-day forms through digital representations which people continuously produce. Media presence helps them create their identity. Social systems experience a change because people now produce themselves as products which spread through social networks (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 112).

The models demonstrate through their various elements and distinct yet complementary features that network society influence operates as a complex system which combines mental processes with social values and economic factors, and technological systems, and personal identity elements. The research findings confirm digital capital operates through context which emerges from continuous interactions between actor strategies and platform operational systems. Social agency exists as an active system which operates through different social levels during the digital era. The study of social agency in digital times needs sociology to understand its complex social structure.

CONCLUSION

The network society experiences influence transformations which sociologists study to find new social agency structures. The traditional definition of influence based on social position and knowledge control has evolved into a complex system which depends on digital assets and user engagement and technical systems that determine what information people can view and distribute. Digital capital serves as the main analytical tool which reveals how influence spreads through networked environments because it represents an evolving system which develops through audience-platform interactions.

The research demonstrates that digital capital development requires more than follower accumulation and visibility acquisition because it depends on complex systems which involve content sharing and network presence maintenance and interaction control. The social value of capital emerges through its ability to transform into actual social power which shapes how people think and behave. People can use digital capital to create social effects through their social activities which make digital capital into a continuous social impact process.

Self-presentation strategies analysis within this framework showed that network society legitimacy now depends on factors which exceed institutional ties and conventional cultural capital. The system develops through user interactions which use symbolic similarities and audience trust-building techniques, and audience trust maintenance practices. Social recognition standards have undergone a major transformation which now bases credibility on sustainable communication abilities instead of academic or social positions.

The agency maintains its interactive nature through a technical system which dictates its possible actions because the attention economy and algorithms determine its operational conditions. Network society influence depends on actor production activities and platform algorithms which determine content visibility through their attention-attracting content selection process. Digital capital operates through a selective system which maintains social inequalities between network



users and determines influence through unequal interactions between people and technological systems.

The applied models analyzed further confirmed that digital influencers do not constitute a homogeneous category but reflect multiple patterns of social agency, ranging from cognitive, value based, consumerist, algorithmic, and political, to identity-oriented forms. The network society operates through multiple digital capital systems which interact with different user behaviors and platform-based autonomy levels to produce its social influence. The system shows digital agency operates between its deep meaning-based influence and the shallow trend-driven attention-based dissemination process.

The network society has transformed influence through its new networked system which uses digital capital and interactive legitimacy and algorithmic mediation instead of traditional cultural and institutional capital. Digital influencers function as content creators who transform their capital into social power through platform-based technical limitations which determine their operational space.

The network society experiences a complete transformation in social agency because digital capital now operates as the main power source for influence. The interaction between influencers and their audience creates their legitimacy which algorithms and attention economy systems determine their operational limits. Digital influencers serve as main players who operate through an intricate system of connections which enables them to transform their online resources into social power during a period of continuous platform evolution and shifting user engagement patterns.

Digital influencers exist as a phenomenon which goes past their role as media figures who communicate with their followers. The research provides an essential method for analyzing the major social changes which modern society has undergone. Social and technical elements now combine in ways which developers never predicted to create new social agency systems and recognition patterns. Influence mechanisms. The process takes place through a new digital network system which creates relationships based on interaction patterns and visibility levels, and meaning generation instead of physical distances or organizational ties.

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