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PLATFORMIZED CULTURAL PRODUCTION: RECONFIGURING ART WORLDS IN THE CREATOR ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has significantly transformed the organization of cultural production in contemporary societies. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have evolved beyond distribution channels to become socio-technical infrastructures that shape how cultural content is created, circulated, and valued. While existing research has examined the economic and technological dimensions of platform ecosystems, less attention has been given to how digital platforms reshape the sociological structures underlying cultural production. This study addresses this gap by revisiting Becker's concept of Art Worlds in the context of platform-mediated cultural production. Using a qualitative research design, this study combines digital ethnography, platform analysis, and semi-structured interviews with digital creators to examine how cultural production operates within platform environments. The findings reveal that cultural production in platform societies is structured through four key dimensions: algorithmic mediation, platform governance, engagement-based valuation, and participatory audiences. These mechanisms collectively shape the visibility, circulation, and valuation of cultural content within digital ecosystems. Building on these findings, this article proposes the concept of Platformized Cultural Production and introduces the notion of Platform Art Worlds as a theoretical extension of Becker's framework. By integrating insights from cultural sociology and platform studies, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how socio-technical infrastructures reorganize the dynamics of cultural production in contemporary digital societies.

KEYWORDS: Algorithmic Mediation; Creator Economy; Cultural Sociology; Platformized Cultural Production; Platform Societies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the rapid expansion of digital platforms has profoundly transformed the ways cultural content is produced, circulated, and valued across the globe (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2023). Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Patreon no longer function merely as channels of distribution; rather, they operate as socio-technical infrastructures that organize cultural production on a global scale. Through algorithmic recommendation systems, engagement-based metrics, and data-driven monetization mechanisms, these platforms enable individuals to create, disseminate, and monetize cultural content directly to audiences (van Dijck, 2020). This transformation has contributed to the emergence of what is widely described as the creator economy, a socio-economic ecosystem in which independent creators generate cultural content while relying on platform-mediated visibility, audience engagement, and digital monetization systems.

The rise of platform-based cultural production represents a significant shift from earlier institutional models of cultural production (Mukhlis et al. 2023). Historically, the production and circulation of cultural goods were largely structured by cultural institutions such as galleries, publishing houses, record labels, and broadcasting organizations (Chimenti et al., 2025). Within the sociology of art and culture, these institutional arrangements have been extensively analyzed through theories of cultural production. One of the most influential frameworks in this tradition is Howard S. Becker's concept of Art Worlds, which conceptualizes artistic production as a collective activity sustained through networks of actors who cooperate through shared conventions, institutional arrangements, and collaborative practices. In Becker's formulation, artistic works are not simply the outcome of individual creativity but emerge from coordinated cooperation among artists, curators, distributors, critics, and audiences who collectively sustain the production and circulation of cultural goods.

Despite its enduring influence in the sociology of art, Becker's Art Worlds framework was developed in a historical context in which cultural production was largely organized through institutional and interpersonal networks rather than digital infrastructures (Ross & Nieborg, 2021). The emergence of platform-based cultural ecosystems introduces new structural dynamics that challenge several assumptions embedded in classical theories of cultural production. In contemporary platform environments, the visibility, circulation, and

valuation of cultural content are increasingly mediated by algorithmic recommendation systems, platform governance structures, and engagement-based metrics such as views, likes, and shares (Ranchordás & Goantă, 2020). These socio-technical processes not only shape how cultural content reaches audiences but also influence what types of cultural production gain visibility, legitimacy, and economic value within digital ecosystems.

Recent scholarship in platform studies and digital culture has highlighted the growing role of digital platforms as infrastructures that organize economic, social, and cultural activities (Yang & Vicari, 2021). Research on the platform society emphasizes how digital platforms restructure social interaction through processes of algorithmic mediation, datafication, and platform governance (Mukhlis & Saidah, 2025). At the same time, studies of the creator economy have documented the emergence of new forms of cultural labor in which independent creators rely on platforms to produce, distribute, and monetize content while cultivating direct relationships with audiences. However, much of this scholarship has primarily focused on the economic and technological dimensions of platform ecosystems, with comparatively limited attention to how platform infrastructures reshape the sociological structures underlying cultural production itself.

This limitation indicates the need to revisit and extend classical theories of cultural production in order to account for the structural transformations introduced by platform-mediated cultural ecosystems (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022). If traditional Art Worlds were organized through institutional networks and professional conventions, contemporary cultural production increasingly operates through platform infrastructures that mediate interactions between creators, audiences, algorithms, and monetization systems (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2025). These transformations raise important questions regarding how collaborative networks in cultural production are reorganized, how cultural visibility and legitimacy are negotiated within algorithmic environments, and how the roles of creators and audiences evolve within platform-based cultural systems.

In response to these developments, this article seeks to reconceptualize Becker's notion of Art Worlds within the context of platform-mediated cultural production (Mukhlis, 2025). Specifically, the article introduces the concept of Platformized Cultural Production as an analytical framework for

understanding how cultural production in platform societies is organized through the interaction between digital creators, algorithmic recommendation systems, platform governance structures, engagement-based valuation mechanisms, and participatory audiences (Rokka, 2021). Rather than viewing platforms merely as technological intermediaries, this article argues that platforms function as organizing structures that shape the conditions under which cultural content is produced, circulated, and valued.

To advance this argument, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) How do digital platforms restructure the collaborative networks underlying cultural production?
- (2) In what ways do algorithmic recommendation systems reshape cultural visibility and legitimacy within platform-mediated environments?
- (3) How does the emergence of the creator economy transform the relationships between creators, audiences, and traditional cultural institutions?

To explore these questions, this study employs a qualitative research approach combining digital platform analysis, digital ethnography, and semi-structured interviews with selected digital creators (Mukhlis & Abdullah, 2025). This methodological strategy enables the study to examine how cultural production practices are organized within platform-mediated environments and how creators navigate the socio-technical infrastructures that structure visibility and participation in digital cultural ecosystems.

The contribution of this article is threefold. First, it extends Becker's Art Worlds framework by examining how platform infrastructures reconfigure the collaborative networks that sustain cultural production. Second, it develops the concept of Platformized Cultural Production as a theoretical lens for analyzing cultural production within platform societies and the creator economy. Third, the article contributes to debates in cultural sociology by bridging classical theories of cultural production with contemporary scholarship in platform studies and digital humanities. In doing so, the article provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how the platformization of digital infrastructures is transforming the organization of cultural production in contemporary societies.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows. The next section reviews the literature on cultural production, platform societies, and the creator economy. The subsequent section develops

the theoretical framework of platformized cultural production by revisiting Becker's Art Worlds. The following section outlines the research methodology. The empirical findings are then presented and analyzed, followed by a discussion of their theoretical implications for cultural sociology and platform studies. The article concludes by summarizing the study's contributions and outlining directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Cultural Production and the Sociology of Art

The study of cultural production has long occupied a central position in the sociology of art and culture (Bakenova et al., 2026). Early sociological perspectives challenged the notion that artistic production is solely the outcome of individual creativity by emphasizing the social structures that enable and sustain cultural production (Mukhlis et al. 2025). Within this tradition, artistic works are understood as products of collective processes shaped by networks of collaboration, institutional arrangements, and shared conventions.

One of the most influential contributions to this field is Howard S. Becker's concept of Art Worlds. Becker conceptualizes artistic production as a cooperative activity involving a network of participants who contribute to the creation, distribution, and evaluation of artistic works (Zhang & Zhang, 2025). In this framework, artists rely on the coordinated efforts of various actors, including curators, distributors, critics, technicians, and audiences. These actors operate within a system of conventions that structure how artistic production is organized and recognized within a given cultural field.

The concept of Art Worlds emphasizes that artistic production is not an isolated act of creativity but a socially organized process (Sundberg & Holmström, 2024). Cultural works emerge from collaborative networks that make artistic production possible, from the provision of resources and technical expertise to the institutional mechanisms that legitimize cultural value (Mukhlis, Janwari, et al., 2023). As such, cultural production is embedded in broader social systems that shape both the opportunities and constraints faced by cultural producers.

However, Becker's framework was developed in a historical context in which cultural production was largely mediated by institutional networks such as galleries, publishing houses, record labels, and broadcasting organizations (Manoli, 2026). While this framework remains influential, the rise of digital

platforms has introduced new actors, infrastructures, and mechanisms that significantly transform the organization of cultural production.

2.2 Platformization and the Transformation of Cultural Production

In recent years, the concept of platformization has emerged as a key analytical lens for understanding the growing influence of digital platforms in organizing social, economic, and cultural activities (Ren, 2024). Platformization refers to the process through which digital platforms become the dominant infrastructures that structure interactions, transactions, and content circulation within digital ecosystems (Mukhlis, 2025a).

Digital platforms operate not only as technological intermediaries but also as socio-technical systems that actively shape the conditions under which cultural production takes place (Tafesse & Dayan, 2023). Through algorithmic recommendation systems, data-driven governance structures, and monetization mechanisms, platforms organize the visibility, distribution, and economic valuation of digital content (Li et al., 2026). As a result, platforms increasingly function as infrastructural gatekeepers that influence what types of cultural content gain prominence within digital environments.

In the context of cultural production, platformization alters the relationships between creators, audiences, and institutions (Edeling & Wies, 2024). Digital platforms enable creators to bypass traditional cultural intermediaries while simultaneously subjecting cultural production to new forms of algorithmic governance and platform regulation (Mukhlis, Arifin, Ridwan, Zulfaidah, et al., 2025). Visibility within platform ecosystems is often determined by engagement metrics such as views, likes, and shares, which function as indicators of cultural relevance and popularity.

These transformations suggest that cultural production in platform societies cannot be fully understood through traditional institutional frameworks alone (Branca et al., 2024). Instead, it requires analytical approaches that account for the socio-technical infrastructures that organize cultural visibility, participation, and value formation in digital environments.

2.3 The Emergence of the Creator Economy

The increasing centrality of digital platforms in cultural production has contributed to the rise of what is widely referred to as the creator economy (Dolbec & Smith, 2025). The creator economy describes a socio-economic system in which individuals produce cultural content independently

while relying on digital platforms for distribution, audience engagement, and revenue generation.

Within this ecosystem, creators function simultaneously as producers, distributors, and entrepreneurs who manage their own cultural production activities (Mukhlis, Maryam, et al., 2023). Unlike traditional cultural industries where production processes are coordinated through institutional hierarchies, the creator economy is characterized by more decentralized forms of cultural production in which creators interact directly with audiences through platform infrastructures (Stanikzai & Mittal, 2025).

At the same time, the creator economy introduces new forms of dependency on platform ecosystems. Creators rely on algorithmic recommendation systems to gain visibility, while platform monetization mechanisms determine the economic sustainability of cultural production (Sun et al., 2024). Consequently, creators must navigate the technological, economic, and algorithmic logics embedded within platform infrastructures.

This dynamic highlights the emergence of new forms of cultural labor in which creative practices are closely intertwined with platform governance, audience engagement strategies, and algorithmic optimization (Mukhlis et al., 2024).

2.4 From Art Worlds to Platformized Cultural Production

While Becker's concept of Art Worlds emphasizes the collaborative networks that sustain cultural production, the rise of digital platforms suggests that these networks are increasingly mediated by socio-technical infrastructures (Prandelli et al., 2024). In platform societies, cultural production involves not only human actors but also algorithmic systems, platform governance mechanisms, and engagement-based valuation processes.

To capture these transformations, this article introduces the concept of Platformized Cultural Production (Yustikasari, 2025). This concept refers to a form of cultural production in which the creation, circulation, and valuation of cultural goods are structurally mediated by digital platform infrastructures.

Platformized cultural production is characterized by several key structural features.

First, algorithmic mediation plays a central role in shaping cultural visibility. Platform algorithms determine which content becomes visible to audiences, thereby influencing the circulation and popularity of cultural products.

Second, platform governance regulates the conditions under which cultural production takes place. Platform policies, monetization rules, and content moderation systems shape how creators produce and distribute cultural content.

Third, engagement-based valuation functions as a new mechanism of cultural evaluation. Metrics such as views, likes, shares, and comments serve as indicators of cultural relevance and success within platform environments.

Fourth, participatory audiences play an active role in the circulation and amplification of cultural content. Audiences do not merely consume cultural products but contribute to their visibility and dissemination through interactive engagement.

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that contemporary cultural production operates within what can be described as Platform Art Worlds, in which creators, algorithms, platforms, and audiences collectively shape the production and circulation of cultural content (Gu et al., 2025). This framework extends Becker's theory by incorporating the socio-technical infrastructures that increasingly organize cultural production in digital societies.

2.5. Conceptualizing Platformized Cultural Production

Building on the preceding discussion, Platformized Cultural Production can be defined as a form of cultural production in which creative practices, content circulation, and cultural valuation are organized through the interaction between creators, platform infrastructures, algorithmic systems, and participatory audiences (Ren, 2025).

This conceptualization highlights the transformation of cultural production from institutionally mediated networks toward platform-mediated ecosystems (Yulista, 2025). In such environments, the production of cultural value is no longer determined solely by traditional cultural institutions but is increasingly shaped by algorithmic visibility, engagement metrics, and the dynamics of platform governance.

By reconceptualizing the structure of cultural production in this way, the concept of platformized cultural production provides a theoretical framework for understanding how digital platforms reorganize the relationships between creativity, technology, and cultural value in contemporary societies.

2.6. Conceptualizing Platformized Cultural Production

Building on Becker's concept of Art Worlds and recent scholarship on platform societies, this article

proposes a conceptual framework of Platformized Cultural Production to explain how cultural production is reorganized in digital platform environments.

In traditional Art Worlds, cultural production is structured through collaborative networks involving artists, cultural intermediaries, institutions, and audiences (Sulastri, 2025). These networks operate through shared conventions and institutional infrastructures that coordinate the creation, distribution, and evaluation of artistic works. Within this framework, cultural value is largely mediated by institutional actors such as curators, critics, publishers, and galleries, who function as gatekeepers of cultural legitimacy.

However, in contemporary platform societies, these collaborative networks are increasingly mediated by digital infrastructures. Cultural production no longer operates solely through institutional structures but is increasingly organized through the interaction between digital creators, algorithmic systems, platform governance mechanisms, and participatory audiences (Sukmawati, 2025). As a result, platforms function as central infrastructures that shape the conditions under which cultural content is produced, circulated, and valued.

To capture these transformations, this article introduces the concept of Platformized Cultural Production. This concept refers to a form of cultural production in which the creation, circulation, and valuation of cultural goods are structurally mediated by digital platforms and their associated socio-technical mechanisms.

Platformized cultural production is characterized by several structural dimensions. First, algorithmic mediation structures the visibility and circulation of cultural content through recommendation systems and content-ranking mechanisms. Second, platform governance regulates the conditions under which cultural production takes place through policies, monetization systems, and content moderation practices (Satory, 2025). Third, engagement-based valuation functions as a new mechanism of cultural evaluation in which metrics such as views, likes, and shares become indicators of cultural relevance and popularity. Fourth, participatory audiences play an active role in amplifying and circulating cultural content through interactive engagement within platform ecosystems.

These structural dimensions collectively shape the dynamics of digital cultural production and the formation of cultural visibility within platform

environments. The relationships among these elements are illustrated in the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.

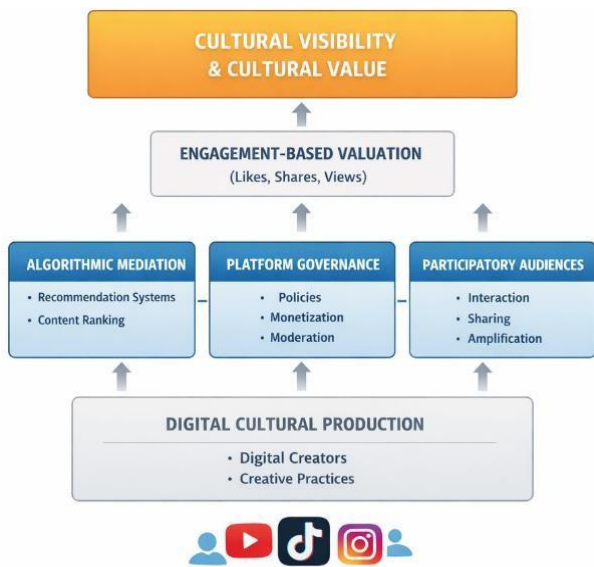


Figure 1: Platformized Cultural Production Model

Figure 1 illustrates how digital cultural production is structured through the interaction between creators, platform infrastructures, algorithmic mediation, governance mechanisms, and participatory audiences. Within this system, engagement-based metrics function as mechanisms of cultural valuation that shape the visibility and circulation of cultural content. Cultural visibility and cultural value therefore emerge from the dynamic interplay between creator practices, algorithmic systems, and audience participation within platform ecosystems.

While this model explains the structural dynamics of cultural production in platform environments, it also suggests a broader theoretical shift in the organization of cultural production. Specifically, the emergence of platform infrastructures requires a reconsideration of Becker’s Art Worlds framework.

In Becker’s original formulation, cultural production is organized through networks of human actors who cooperate through shared conventions and institutional arrangements. However, the rise of digital platforms introduces new actors and infrastructures that transform the organization of these networks. Algorithms, platform policies, engagement metrics, and participatory audiences increasingly function as structural components of cultural production.

To conceptualize this transformation, this article proposes the notion of Platform Art Worlds, which extends Becker’s framework by incorporating the

socio-technical infrastructures that organize cultural production in platform societies. In this extended framework, collaborative networks are no longer mediated solely by institutions and interpersonal cooperation but also by algorithmic infrastructures and platform governance systems.

The theoretical transition from traditional Art Worlds to Platform Art Worlds is illustrated in Figure 2.

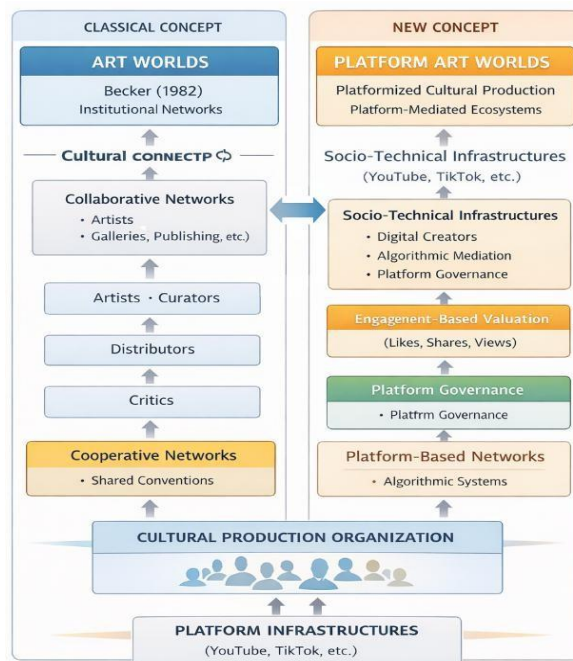


Figure 2: From Art Worlds to Platform Art Worlds

Figure 2 highlights the transformation of cultural production from institutionally mediated art worlds toward platform-mediated cultural ecosystems. While traditional art worlds relied on institutional gatekeepers such as curators, galleries, and publishers, platform art worlds operate through algorithmic mediation, engagement-based valuation, and participatory audiences. In this sense, platform infrastructures increasingly function as organizing structures that reshape how cultural value, visibility, and legitimacy are produced in contemporary digital societies.

Taken together, the concepts of Platformized Cultural Production and Platform Art Worlds provide a theoretical framework for understanding how digital platforms reorganize the social structures underlying cultural production. By extending Becker’s theory into the context of platform societies, this framework highlights the growing role of socio-technical infrastructures in shaping creative practices, cultural visibility, and the distribution of cultural value in the digital age.

2.7. Theoretical Contribution

The conceptual framework developed in this article contributes to the sociology of cultural production in several important ways.

First, this study revisits Becker's Art Worlds by situating the theory within the context of contemporary platform societies. While Becker's framework emphasizes collaborative networks among human actors who collectively sustain artistic production, the present study demonstrates that cultural production in digital environments increasingly operates through socio-technical infrastructures. By incorporating algorithmic systems, platform governance mechanisms, engagement-based metrics, and participatory audiences, the concept of Platformized Cultural Production extends the analytical scope of the Art Worlds framework beyond institutionally mediated networks.

Second, the article introduces the concept of Platform Art Worlds as a theoretical extension of Becker's model. In traditional art worlds, cultural value and legitimacy are largely mediated by institutional actors such as curators, galleries, publishers, and critics. In contrast, platform art worlds are structured through digital infrastructures in which algorithms, engagement metrics, and platform governance systems influence how cultural content becomes visible and valuable. This shift indicates that the mechanisms of cultural mediation in contemporary societies increasingly operate through platform-based socio-technical systems rather than solely through institutional gatekeepers.

Third, the concept of Platformized Cultural Production provides an analytical framework for understanding how digital platforms reorganize the relationships between creators, audiences, and infrastructures of cultural circulation. In platform-mediated environments, creators function simultaneously as cultural producers, distributors, and entrepreneurs who operate within algorithmically structured ecosystems. At the same time, audiences participate in the production of cultural visibility through interactive engagement, content sharing, and algorithmic feedback loops. These dynamics highlight the emergence of new forms of cultural production in which cultural value is generated through the interplay between creative practices, platform infrastructures, and participatory audiences.

Finally, by integrating insights from cultural sociology, platform studies, and digital humanities, this framework contributes to ongoing debates about the transformation of cultural production in digital societies. The theoretical model proposed in this

article offers a conceptual basis for future research examining how digital infrastructures shape cultural visibility, creative labor, and the distribution of cultural value across different platform environments.

Taken together, the concepts of Platformized Cultural Production and Platform Art Worlds provide a theoretical lens for analyzing how platform infrastructures restructure the organization of cultural production in contemporary digital societies.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine how cultural production is reorganized within platform-mediated environments. A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate for this research because it enables an in-depth exploration of the social processes, practices, and interactions that shape digital cultural production within platform ecosystems (Padgett, 2017). Rather than focusing solely on measurable indicators such as engagement metrics or platform performance statistics, this study seeks to understand how creators interpret and navigate platform infrastructures, how algorithmic systems influence cultural visibility, and how participatory audiences contribute to the circulation of cultural content.

Qualitative research is especially useful for investigating socio-technical environments in which technological systems and human practices interact (Berg, 2001). By adopting this approach, the study aims to capture the complex dynamics that characterize platformized cultural production, including the interplay between creative practices, algorithmic mediation, and platform governance structures.

3.2. Case Selection

The empirical focus of this study centers on cultural production practices within major digital platforms that support creator-driven content ecosystems, particularly YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. These platforms were selected because they represent some of the most influential infrastructures of the contemporary creator economy and have become central sites for the production and circulation of digital cultural content.

These platforms are particularly relevant for examining platformized cultural production because they rely heavily on algorithmic recommendation systems, engagement-based valuation mechanisms, and monetization structures that shape the visibility and economic sustainability of cultural content. By focusing on these platforms, the study is able to

analyze how platform infrastructures mediate the relationships between creators, audiences, and cultural visibility in contemporary digital environments.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a strategy commonly employed in qualitative research to identify participants who possess relevant experience and knowledge related to the research topic. The study involved 15 digital creators who actively produce cultural content on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

Participants were selected based on several criteria:

1. active engagement in producing cultural or creative content on digital platforms,
2. experience in managing audiences and content visibility within platform ecosystems, and
3. familiarity with platform features such as recommendation algorithms, audience engagement metrics, and monetization mechanisms.

This sampling strategy allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives from creators who operate within different platform environments and creative fields.

3.4. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted between January and April 2025. During this period, the study employed a combination of digital ethnography, platform analysis, and semi-structured interviews with digital creators.

First, digital ethnography was conducted to observe how cultural content is produced, circulated, and interacted with on digital platforms. This method involved systematic observation of creator practices, audience engagement patterns, and platform features that influence content visibility and dissemination.

Second, platform analysis was used to examine how platform infrastructures—such as recommendation algorithms, monetization mechanisms, and content governance policies—shape the conditions under which cultural production occurs. This analysis focused on identifying the structural mechanisms through which platforms influence the distribution and valuation of cultural content.

Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected digital creators to explore their experiences in producing cultural content within platform ecosystems.

3.5. Interview Procedure

Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was conducted online through video

conferencing platforms. With participants' consent, all interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed for analytical purposes.

The interviews explored several key themes, including creators' experiences with algorithmic visibility, strategies for maintaining audience engagement, perceptions of platform governance, and challenges associated with sustaining cultural production within platform ecosystems. This interview format allowed participants to provide detailed insights into how they navigate the socio-technical infrastructures that shape digital cultural production.

3.6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allows researchers to identify recurring patterns and themes across qualitative data. The analysis focused on identifying themes related to the structural elements of platformized cultural production, including algorithmic mediation, platform governance, engagement-based valuation, and participatory audiences.

The analytical process involved several stages. First, the data were reviewed and organized to gain a comprehensive understanding of creator practices and platform dynamics. Second, the data were coded to identify recurring themes related to the mechanisms through which platforms influence cultural production and visibility. Third, the identified themes were interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework developed in this article in order to explain how platform infrastructures reorganize the collaborative networks underlying cultural production.

Through this process, empirical observations were systematically linked with the theoretical concepts proposed in this study.

3.7. Research Trustworthiness

To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, this study employed methodological triangulation by combining multiple sources of data, including digital ethnography, platform analysis, and creator interviews. The use of multiple methods enabled the researcher to cross-validate insights obtained from different forms of empirical evidence.

In addition, the analysis involved iterative interpretation and comparison of data in order to ensure that the identified themes accurately reflected the patterns observed in the empirical material. This approach strengthens the robustness of the findings and supports the transparency of the analytical process.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the research process. All participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study prior to participating in the interviews, and informed consent was obtained from each participant.

To ensure confidentiality and protect participants' privacy, all identifying information has been anonymized in the presentation of the findings. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any stage without any consequences.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Algorithmic Mediation and the Structuring of Cultural Visibility

One of the most significant findings of this study concerns the role of algorithmic mediation in structuring cultural visibility within platform environments. Across the three platforms examined—YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram—creators consistently described algorithmic recommendation systems as a central mechanism shaping the circulation of cultural content.

Rather than relying on traditional cultural intermediaries such as curators, publishers, or institutional gatekeepers, creators emphasized that platform algorithms determine whether content becomes visible to audiences. Recommendation systems function as automated distribution infrastructures that amplify certain forms of cultural content while limiting the visibility of others.

Several interview participants described how algorithmic visibility directly influences their creative decisions. One creator explained:

"If the algorithm does not recommend your content, it is very difficult to reach new audiences, no matter how much effort you put into the production."

Another participant noted that creators often adapt their strategies in response to algorithmic dynamics:

"We constantly try to understand what the algorithm prefers. Sometimes it is about timing, sometimes about how long the video is, or how people interact with it in the first few minutes."

These observations indicate that creators actively adjust their production practices in response to algorithmic feedback. In this sense, algorithmic systems operate not only as distribution mechanisms but also as structuring forces that shape the organization of creative practices.

As illustrated in Figure 1, algorithmic mediation functions as a central infrastructural mechanism that

shapes the circulation and visibility of cultural content within platform ecosystems.

4.2. Platform Governance and the Regulation of Cultural Production

The findings also highlight the significant influence of platform governance structures on the conditions under which cultural production occurs. Platform policies, monetization systems, and content moderation practices shape the boundaries of acceptable content and influence how creators organize their production strategies.

Creators frequently referred to platform policies and monetization rules as factors that affect their ability to sustain cultural production. One participant explained:

"You have to follow the platform's rules if you want your content to stay visible or monetized. Sometimes that affects what kind of content you are willing to produce."

Another creator emphasized the impact of monetization structures:

"The platform decides which content can generate revenue. That influences how creators design their content and how often they publish."

These governance mechanisms function as regulatory frameworks that structure the economic and cultural conditions of platformized cultural production. While platforms provide opportunities for creators to distribute content independently, they simultaneously impose rules that influence how creators design, produce, and circulate cultural works.

As indicated in Figure 1, platform governance operates as a structural component that mediates the relationship between creators and audiences, shaping the institutional conditions of digital cultural production.

4.3. Engagement-Based Valuation and the Measurement of Cultural Value

Another key finding concerns the growing role of engagement-based valuation mechanisms in shaping the perception of cultural value within platform ecosystems. Unlike traditional cultural institutions where cultural value is often assessed by critics, curators, or institutional recognition, digital platforms rely heavily on quantitative metrics such as views, likes, comments, and shares.

Creators consistently described engagement metrics as indicators that influence both platform visibility and audience recognition. One creator explained:

"Views and likes are not just numbers. They determine whether the platform pushes your content to more people."

Another participant highlighted the relationship between engagement and algorithmic promotion:

“When people start liking and sharing your content, the platform shows it to more users. That’s how content becomes visible.”

This process creates a feedback loop in which engagement metrics function simultaneously as indicators of audience attention and as mechanisms that influence algorithmic distribution. As a result, cultural value within platform ecosystems is increasingly measured through data-driven indicators rather than institutional forms of cultural evaluation.

These findings reinforce the argument that engagement-based metrics constitute a new mechanism of cultural valuation in platform societies, as illustrated in Figure 1.

4.4. Participatory Audiences and the Circulation of Cultural Content

The study also reveals the central role of participatory audiences in shaping the circulation and amplification of cultural content within digital platforms. Unlike traditional cultural audiences who primarily consume cultural products, platform audiences actively participate in the dissemination and visibility of cultural works.

Audience engagement through actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, and remixing content contributes to the amplification of cultural visibility within platform ecosystems. One creator described the role of audience interaction as follows:

“When audiences start sharing your content, it spreads much faster than you could ever do on your own.”

Another participant emphasized the importance of audience participation in algorithmic visibility:

“Audience engagement tells the algorithm that the content is interesting. Without that interaction, it is difficult for the content to circulate.”

These findings indicate that audiences function not only as consumers but also as co-producers of cultural circulation. Through participatory interaction, audiences contribute directly to the amplification and distribution of cultural content within platform ecosystems.

As illustrated in Figure 1, participatory audiences represent an important structural dimension of platformized cultural production.

4.5. From Art Worlds to Platform Art Worlds

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that cultural production within digital platforms operates through a socio-technical ecosystem that differs significantly from the institutional networks described in Becker’s original Art Worlds framework.

In traditional art worlds, the circulation and valuation of cultural works depend largely on institutional actors such as curators, galleries, publishers, and critics. In contrast, the empirical findings of this study show that cultural production within platform environments is mediated by algorithmic systems, engagement-based valuation mechanisms, and participatory audiences.

These transformations suggest the emergence of what this article conceptualizes as Platform Art Worlds, in which socio-technical infrastructures function as central mediators of cultural production. As illustrated in Figure 2, the transition from traditional art worlds to platform art worlds reflects a broader transformation in the organization of cultural production in contemporary digital societies.

Table 1: Empirical Dimensions of Platformized Cultural Production

Dimension	Empirical Evidence	Implication
Algorithmic mediation	Creators adapt content strategies to algorithmic recommendation systems	Algorithms function as new cultural gatekeepers
Platform governance	Platform policies and monetization rules influence production strategies	Platforms regulate the conditions of cultural production
Engagement-based valuation	Metrics such as views, likes, and shares determine visibility	Cultural value becomes data-driven
Participatory audiences	Audience interaction amplifies content circulation	Audiences function as co-producers of cultural visibility

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into how cultural production is reorganized within contemporary platform societies (Bleier et al., 2024). By examining the practices of digital creators across major platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, this study demonstrates that cultural production is increasingly structured by socio-technical infrastructures that shape the visibility, circulation, and valuation of cultural content (Nismawati, 2025). The empirical evidence presented in this study supports the argument that platform environments transform the organizational dynamics of cultural production, extending the analytical scope of classical sociological frameworks.

One of the central findings concerns the role of algorithmic mediation in structuring cultural visibility. In traditional cultural production systems, the visibility and legitimacy of cultural works are often mediated by institutional actors such as curators, publishers, and critics (Hollebeek et al.,

2024). However, the findings of this study suggest that digital platforms have introduced a new form of infrastructural gatekeeping in which algorithmic recommendation systems play a decisive role in determining the circulation of cultural content (Jarrett, 2022). Creators' strategies to adapt their production practices to algorithmic preferences indicate that algorithms function not merely as technological tools but as structuring mechanisms that shape creative decision-making.

This observation resonates with broader discussions in platform studies regarding the increasing influence of algorithmic infrastructures in organizing digital communication and content distribution (Cai et al., 2024). Within platform environments, algorithms operate as mechanisms that structure attention and visibility, thereby influencing which cultural products gain prominence within digital ecosystems (Indra Martadinata, 2025). The findings therefore support the argument that algorithmic mediation constitutes a key structural dimension of platformized cultural production, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The findings also highlight the importance of platform governance in regulating cultural production. While digital platforms enable creators to distribute content independently from traditional cultural institutions, they simultaneously impose regulatory frameworks that shape the conditions under which cultural production occurs (Bhargava, 2022). Platform policies, monetization systems, and content moderation practices influence the types of content that creators produce and the strategies they employ to maintain visibility and economic sustainability.

This dual role of platforms—as both infrastructures of opportunity and systems of regulation—illustrates the complex power dynamics embedded within platform ecosystems (Schram, 2020). Platforms provide new opportunities for creative expression and distribution while simultaneously exerting control over the economic and cultural conditions of production (Handayani, 2025). In this sense, platform governance represents a new institutional layer that structures cultural production within platform societies.

Another important finding concerns the role of engagement-based valuation mechanisms in shaping the perception of cultural value. Unlike traditional art worlds where cultural value is often determined through institutional recognition or critical evaluation, digital platforms rely heavily on quantitative metrics such as views, likes, comments, and shares. These metrics function not only as indicators of audience attention but also as

mechanisms that influence algorithmic promotion and content distribution.

The reliance on engagement metrics suggests that cultural value within platform environments is increasingly constructed through data-driven systems of measurement. This transformation represents a shift from institutionally mediated forms of cultural valuation toward algorithmically mediated forms of cultural visibility (Ade Sitorus, 2025). In this context, engagement metrics become central mechanisms through which cultural relevance is produced and recognized within digital ecosystems.

In addition to algorithmic mediation and engagement-based valuation, the findings also reveal the central role of participatory audiences in shaping the circulation of cultural content. Unlike traditional cultural audiences who primarily consume cultural products, platform audiences actively participate in the amplification and dissemination of cultural works through interactive engagement. Actions such as liking, commenting, sharing, and remixing content contribute to the algorithmic signals that determine the visibility of cultural content.

These dynamics highlight the emergence of audiences as active participants in the production of cultural visibility. In platform environments, audiences function not only as consumers but also as co-producers who contribute to the circulation and amplification of cultural content (Syahidah et al., 2025). This transformation reflects a broader shift in the organization of cultural production in which audience participation becomes a central component of cultural circulation.

Taken together, these findings support the theoretical argument advanced in this article regarding the emergence of Platform Art Worlds. While Becker's original formulation of Art Worlds emphasized collaborative networks among human actors who collectively sustain artistic production, the findings of this study suggest that contemporary cultural production increasingly operates within socio-technical ecosystems in which algorithms, platform infrastructures, engagement metrics, and participatory audiences function as structural components of cultural production.

Importantly, the findings of this study make an explicit theoretical contribution to cultural sociology by extending Becker's concept of Art Worlds to the context of digital platform societies. The concept of Platformized Cultural Production proposed in this article highlights how socio-technical infrastructures—including algorithms, platform governance mechanisms, engagement-based

valuation systems, and participatory audiences—restructure the collaborative networks underlying cultural production. In doing so, this study expands the analytical framework of cultural production by incorporating the technological infrastructures that increasingly shape creative practices and cultural visibility in digital environments.

Beyond its theoretical contribution, the findings also have broader implications for understanding cultural production in increasingly data-driven media environments. As digital platforms become central infrastructures of cultural circulation, they influence not only the visibility of cultural content but also the conditions under which creative labor is organized. The platformization of cultural production therefore raises important questions regarding power, visibility, and the distribution of cultural value in digital societies.

In light of these transformations, it becomes increasingly important to reconsider how cultural production is conceptualized within digitally mediated environments. Understanding the role of platform infrastructures, algorithmic mediation, and participatory audiences is essential for analyzing the evolving dynamics of cultural production in contemporary societies. The following section summarizes the key contributions of this study and outlines directions for future research.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how cultural production is reorganized within contemporary platform societies by analyzing the practices of digital creators across major platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. The findings demonstrate that cultural production in digital environments is increasingly structured by socio-technical infrastructures that shape cultural visibility, circulation, and valuation. Specifically, the study identifies four key dimensions that characterize platformized cultural production:

algorithmic mediation, platform governance, engagement-based valuation, and participatory audiences. Together, these dimensions illustrate how digital platforms reorganize the relationships between creators, audiences, and infrastructures of cultural circulation. The findings therefore highlight the growing role of platform infrastructures as central mediators of cultural production in contemporary digital ecosystems.

By extending Becker's concept of Art Worlds, this article introduces the notion of Platform Art Worlds as a framework for understanding how cultural production operates within platform-mediated environments. This conceptual contribution emphasizes the importance of socio-technical systems—such as algorithms, engagement metrics, and platform governance—in shaping the dynamics of cultural production in digital societies. Future research could further explore how different platform architectures influence cultural visibility across diverse cultural contexts, as well as how creators navigate the evolving power relations embedded within platform ecosystems. Such investigations will be crucial for advancing sociological understandings of cultural production in an increasingly platformized media landscape.

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8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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