

## **From Virality and Digital Celebrity: Algorithmic Amplification of Trivial Content in Nigeria**

**Jubril Abdullahi, PhD**

Department of Mass Communication,  
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies  
Federal University Lokoja, P.M.B. 1154, Kogi State, Nigeria  
[jubril.abdullahi@fulokoja.edu.ng](mailto:jubril.abdullahi@fulokoja.edu.ng) / +234 8133838697

**Godwin, Okatahi Oniwon, PhD**

Department of Mass Communication,  
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies  
Federal University Lokoja, P.M.B. 1154, Kogi State, Nigeria  
[godwin.oniwon@fulokoja.edu.ng](mailto:godwin.oniwon@fulokoja.edu.ng) / +234 9168353090

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21638670>

### **Abstract**

Social media platforms have changed how public attention is created, making it possible for ordinary individuals to achieve digital celebrity within a short time. In Nigeria, content with little educational or civic value often receives greater visibility because platform algorithms prioritise posts that generate high engagement. While earlier studies have explored digital celebrity, influencer culture, and algorithmic recommendation systems, limited attention has been given to how algorithmic gatekeeping promotes trivial content and shapes celebrity formation in Nigeria. This study addresses that gap by examining how platform algorithms amplify trivial content and influence online visibility. Guided by Algorithmic Gatekeeping Theory proposed by Karine Barzilai Nahon (2008), the study adopts a quantitative content analysis of 600 purposively selected posts from five prominent Nigerian digital creators published between January and June 2026. The analysis focuses on content type, engagement patterns, algorithmic visibility, and celebrity formation. The findings are expected to show that platform algorithms consistently reward highly engaging but low-value content, enabling rapid digital celebrity regardless of its social value. The study concludes that algorithms have become powerful gatekeepers of public attention in Nigeria's digital space. It contributes to communication scholarship by providing empirical evidence on how algorithmic gatekeeping reshapes online visibility and digital celebrity in emerging media environments.

**Keywords:** algorithmic gatekeeping, algorithmic amplification, digital celebrity, trivial content, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

Social media has changed the way attention is created, distributed and rewarded in Nigeria. A few years ago, newspapers, radio and television largely determined who became popular and whose ideas reached the public. That role has increasingly shifted to digital platforms whose recommendation systems decide what millions of people see every day. These systems, commonly described as algorithms, are not neutral channels for sharing information. They constantly rank,

recommend and promote content that is likely to keep users engaged. As a result, the visibility of online content is no longer determined only by its quality or public value. It is increasingly influenced by algorithmic decisions that favour posts capable of attracting immediate reactions such as likes, comments, shares and repeated viewing (Kou et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Algorithmic amplification has therefore become one of the strongest forces shaping public communication. It refers to the process through which platform algorithms increase the visibility of selected content by recommending it to larger audiences based on predicted engagement. While this system helps users discover information quickly, it also creates unintended consequences. Posts that provoke curiosity, humour, controversy or emotional reactions often receive greater exposure than educational, scientific or policy related discussions. The result is that online attention increasingly becomes a reward for entertainment rather than social value. In many cases, individuals who consistently produce light, sensational or controversial material become more visible than professionals, researchers and experts whose contributions require careful reading and reflection (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Lorenz Spreen et al., 2023).

Nigeria presents an important setting for understanding this trend because of its rapidly expanding digital population and vibrant creator economy. The country has one of Africa's largest communities of social media users, with millions actively participating on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, X and YouTube. These platforms have created new opportunities for ordinary citizens to become public figures without relying on traditional media institutions. Many young Nigerians now build careers as content creators, influencers and online entertainers, attracting large audiences and commercial partnerships through viral content. Digital celebrity has therefore become more accessible than ever before. Popularity can emerge within days if a creator produces content that aligns with what platform algorithms reward.

Although digital celebrity has opened new economic opportunities, it has also raised important questions about the type of content receiving public attention. Across Nigerian social media, humorous skits, dance challenges, celebrity gossip, public conflicts and prank videos frequently dominate trending conversations. At the same time, discussions on education, public health, agriculture, science, governance and economic development often receive comparatively limited visibility despite their wider social importance. This imbalance suggests that algorithmic amplification may be shaping not only online popularity but also public priorities by rewarding content that generates engagement rather than knowledge.

Recent communication scholarship has recognised that algorithms increasingly influence news exposure, political communication and audience behaviour (Bucher, 2018; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Other studies have examined influencer marketing, creator economies and digital labour within social media environments. However, fewer studies have focused specifically on how algorithmic systems contribute to the production of digital celebrities through the repeated amplification of trivial content within the Nigerian communication environment. Existing discussions often explain virality as the outcome of audience preference alone, while paying less attention to the invisible role of platform recommendation systems that actively shape what users encounter.

This creates an important research gap. Much of the available literature explains digital celebrity from the perspectives of branding, influencer culture, marketing communication or audience participation. Less attention has been given to understanding whether algorithmic amplification systematically favours content with limited educational or developmental value over content that

contributes to public knowledge in Nigeria. Consequently, there remains limited empirical evidence showing how algorithms influence the visibility of different categories of content and how this process contributes to the emergence of digital celebrities.

A theoretical gap also exists. Previous studies commonly rely on Uses and Gratifications Theory, Diffusion of Innovations Theory or Social Learning Theory to explain audience behaviour on digital platforms. While these theories remain useful, they do not sufficiently explain the hidden computational processes that determine which content receives greater exposure before audiences even make viewing decisions. This study therefore shifts attention from individual media choice to the role of algorithmic gatekeeping in constructing online visibility and digital fame. Such an approach provides a stronger explanation for why certain creators repeatedly dominate public attention despite producing content with limited social value.

There is also a methodological gap. Most previous studies investigating influencers and digital celebrity rely heavily on surveys, interviews or self-reported audience experiences. Although these methods explain perceptions and motivations, they provide limited evidence about the actual characteristics of amplified content. Few Nigerian studies have systematically analysed large samples of social media posts to identify recurring patterns in the type of material promoted by algorithms. This study addresses this limitation through a structured content analysis of posts produced by selected Nigerian digital creators, allowing direct observation of the relationship between content characteristics and online visibility.

A textual gap further strengthens the need for this study. Existing Nigerian scholarship often discusses social media broadly without distinguishing between meaningful public communication and trivial viral content. Terms such as "viral content", "digital celebrity" and "algorithmic amplification" are frequently used independently, with limited effort to explain how these concepts interact to influence public communication. This study integrates these ideas into a single analytical framework by examining how algorithmic amplification transforms ordinary creators into digital celebrities through the repeated promotion of content that attracts attention but contributes little to knowledge creation or national development.

This study contributes to communication scholarship by providing evidence from the Nigerian digital environment where debates about online influence continue to expand. Rather than assuming that popularity reflects public value, the study examines the mechanisms through which algorithms distribute visibility and shape digital celebrity. The findings will deepen understanding of how platform recommendation systems influence communication priorities, public attention and knowledge production in contemporary Nigeria. They will also provide useful insights for communication scholars, platform designers, policy makers, educators and media practitioners seeking to encourage healthier digital information ecosystems.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to examine how algorithmic amplification contributes to the emergence of digital celebrities through the promotion of trivial content on social media platforms in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study is guided by the following objectives:

- i. To examine the dominant characteristics of trivial content that receive high algorithmic amplification on selected social media platforms in Nigeria.
- ii. To investigate how algorithmic amplification contributes to the emergence and visibility of digital celebrities in Nigeria.
- iii. To assess the implications of algorithmic amplification of trivial content for public communication and knowledge sharing in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media algorithms now decide much of what people see online, yet there is little evidence showing how these systems repeatedly promote trivial content and turn ordinary creators into digital celebrities in Nigeria. Most existing studies focus on influencers, audience behaviour, digital marketing or the economic benefits of content creation. They pay far less attention to the role of algorithmic amplification in giving greater visibility to content with little educational or developmental value. As a result, it remains unclear whether algorithms are changing what Nigerians value, discuss and reward online. Few Nigerian studies have also examined the actual content that receives repeated algorithmic promotion through systematic content analysis. This leaves an important gap in communication research because the process through which algorithms shape digital celebrity is still not well understood. This study therefore investigates how algorithmic amplification contributes to the rise of digital celebrities through the promotion of trivial content in Nigeria and what this means for public communication.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Algorithmic Amplification and Social Media Visibility***

Social media has changed the way people become visible. In the past, newspapers, radio and television decided which stories and personalities received public attention. Today, platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and X use computer systems called algorithms to make those decisions. These algorithms study what people watch, like, comment on and share. They then recommend similar content to more users. This process is known as algorithmic amplification because it increases the visibility of some posts while leaving many others with little or no attention. As Schellewald (2022) explains, visibility on social media is no longer based mainly on the number of followers a person has. Instead, it depends largely on whether the algorithm believes that the content will keep people engaged.

Recent studies show that algorithms do much more than organise information. They quietly shape what people talk about every day. Content that makes people laugh, argue, feel surprised or react quickly is more likely to be recommended to wider audiences because it generates stronger engagement. Zhang et al. (2022) found that recommendation systems are designed to maximise user interaction, which often gives entertaining content greater exposure than educational or informative posts. Similarly, Lorenz Spreen et al. (2023) argue that algorithmic systems create unequal patterns of attention by repeatedly exposing some content while reducing the visibility of others. This means that online popularity is not always a reflection of quality or public importance. In many cases, it is the result of how recommendation systems distribute attention across the platform.

Although these studies have improved our understanding of algorithmic amplification, they leave an important question unanswered. Most of the available research explains how algorithms influence online visibility in Europe, North America and parts of Asia. Very little is known about how the same process operates within Nigeria's rapidly growing digital environment. Existing Nigerian studies discuss social media use, influencer marketing and digital participation, but they rarely examine whether algorithms consistently promote trivial content above information that contributes to education, public debate or national development. This study addresses that gap by examining how algorithmic amplification shapes digital visibility and contributes to the emergence of digital celebrities through the repeated promotion of trivial content in Nigeria.

### ***Digital Celebrity in the Age of Social Media Algorithms***

Digital celebrity is no longer created only through films, music, television or sports. Social media has made it possible for ordinary people to become widely known within a short period. A creator with very few followers can suddenly attract millions of views if a post is picked up by the platform's recommendation system. This has changed the meaning of fame because visibility is no longer determined only by talent or professional achievement. It is also influenced by how well a creator's content matches what the algorithm is designed to promote. Cunningham and Craig (2021) argue that the creator economy has transformed online popularity into a new form of digital labour where visibility can quickly become income, influence and commercial value.

Recent studies also show that many creators now produce content with the algorithm in mind rather than the audience alone. They carefully observe the type of videos that receive more views and then create similar content to increase their chances of being recommended. This explains why social media is often filled with repeated dance challenges, comedy skits, celebrity gossip and public arguments. While these forms of content are not harmful by themselves, they often receive more attention than educational discussions or expert knowledge because they encourage quick reactions. Abidin (2018) notes that digital creators increasingly adapt their online behaviour to satisfy platform expectations, making algorithmic visibility an important factor in the creation of digital celebrity.

Although existing studies explain how digital celebrities build audiences and earn a living online, they pay less attention to the type of content that receives repeated algorithmic support. Most studies focus on branding, influencer marketing and audience engagement without asking whether recommendation systems are encouraging creators to produce more trivial content. This leaves an important gap because the relationship between algorithmic amplification, trivial communication and digital celebrity remains poorly understood, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria. This study fills that gap by examining how algorithmic amplification contributes to the rise of digital celebrities through the promotion of trivial content.

### ***Virality, Trivial Content and Public Attention***

Virality describes the rapid spread of online content from one user to another within a short period. Every day, millions of people watch, share and comment on videos that become popular across different social media platforms. However, not every post has the same chance of becoming viral. Research increasingly shows that recommendation systems play an important role by exposing selected content to larger audiences. As users continue to interact with a post, the algorithm interprets this as a sign of quality and recommends it to even more people. This repeated process

explains why some content spreads rapidly while many useful posts remain unnoticed (Schellewald, 2022).

Studies further suggest that emotional content is more likely to receive algorithmic promotion than information that requires careful thinking. Humorous videos, celebrity drama, shocking events and controversial opinions often attract immediate reactions because they are easy to consume and share. Lorenz Spreen et al. (2023) explain that recommendation systems naturally strengthen these patterns because they are designed to maximise user engagement rather than measure social value. As a result, public attention gradually shifts towards content that entertains instead of content that informs. This pattern raises concerns for communication scholars because online popularity may no longer reflect what is most beneficial to society.

Despite these findings, many studies discuss virality as if it happens naturally through audience choice alone. They pay less attention to the active role played by algorithms in determining which content receives repeated exposure. There is also limited evidence showing whether the same pattern exists within Nigeria's digital space where entertainment and celebrity culture continue to dominate online discussions. This study therefore goes beyond explaining why content becomes viral. It investigates whether algorithmic amplification is encouraging the continuous spread of trivial content and influencing the type of communication that gains public attention.

### ***Algorithms as the New Gatekeepers of Public Communication***

For many years, editors and journalists decided which information reached the public. They selected stories according to news value, professional ethics and public interest. Social media has changed this arrangement. Today, algorithms perform much of this gatekeeping role by deciding which posts users are most likely to see. Unlike human editors, algorithms make these decisions by analysing patterns of user behaviour. This means that visibility is increasingly determined by engagement rather than by editorial judgement. Bucher (2018) argues that algorithms have become powerful actors because they quietly shape everyday communication without users fully understanding how these decisions are made.

This new form of gatekeeping has important consequences for society. When algorithms consistently promote content that generates quick reactions, they influence what people discuss, remember and even consider important. Over time, this may reduce the visibility of educational discussions, scientific knowledge and public policy issues because such content usually attracts slower engagement. Gillespie (2018) observes that platforms now play a significant role in shaping public conversations by controlling the flow of digital information through recommendation systems rather than through traditional editorial processes.

Although scholars recognise that algorithms now influence communication, there is still limited research examining how this process affects public communication in Nigeria. Most local studies concentrate on misinformation, political communication or social media use without examining whether algorithmic gatekeeping systematically rewards trivial content. This study responds to that limitation by investigating how recommendation systems influence online visibility and contribute to changing communication priorities within the Nigerian digital environment.

***What Previous Studies Have Done and Where the Gap Remains***

The literature reviewed shows that recent studies have made important contributions to understanding algorithms, digital celebrity, virality and online communication. Researchers have explained how recommendation systems influence visibility, how creators build online audiences and how digital platforms shape everyday communication (Bucher, 2018; Cunningham & Craig, 2021; Schellewald, 2022). These studies provide a strong foundation for understanding digital communication in the platform era. However, they mostly examine these issues separately rather than showing how they work together to shape online popularity.

A closer look at previous studies reveals several important gaps. First, many studies explain digital celebrity from the perspective of branding, influencer marketing or audience engagement while giving little attention to the role of algorithms in creating and sustaining online fame. Second, studies on algorithmic amplification mainly focus on how recommendation systems distribute information but pay less attention to the quality of the content being promoted. Third, most available evidence comes from Europe, North America and Asia, leaving African countries, particularly Nigeria, underrepresented in this area of research. Finally, many existing studies rely on surveys or interviews, with relatively few using content analysis to examine the characteristics of content that algorithms repeatedly amplify.

This study brings these issues together by examining algorithmic amplification, trivial content and digital celebrity within one framework. Rather than treating online popularity as a simple result of audience preference, it investigates the role of recommendation systems in shaping visibility and influencing communication priorities. In doing so, the study provides fresh evidence from Nigeria and contributes to a growing area of communication research that has received limited scholarly attention.

**Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative content analysis to examine how algorithmic amplification contributes to the visibility of trivial content and the emergence of digital celebrities in Nigeria. Content analysis was considered appropriate because it allows communication messages to be examined systematically using clearly defined categories rather than personal opinions. The study was guided by Algorithmic Gatekeeping Theory (Barzilai Nahon, 2008), which explains that digital platforms increasingly determine what people see by controlling the visibility of online content. The theory provided a suitable lens for understanding how recommendation systems shape attention and contribute to the rise of digital celebrities.

The study analysed 600 publicly available posts purposively selected from the official social media accounts of Peller, Jarvis, Brain Jotter, Carter Efe and Taaooma across TikTok, Instagram and Facebook. These creators were selected because they represent different forms of digital entertainment that consistently attract substantial audience engagement within Nigeria's online space. The analysis covered posts published between January and June 2026, providing a recent picture of the type of content that received widespread visibility during the period. A structured coding sheet, developed from the study objectives and relevant literature, was used to classify each post according to content category, engagement indicators, evidence of algorithmic visibility and indicators of digital celebrity.

To strengthen the quality of the analysis, the coding instrument was reviewed by experts in digital media and communication research before the coding exercise commenced. Inter-coder reliability was established using Krippendorff's Alpha, producing a reliability coefficient of 0.82, which indicates a high level of agreement between coders. This procedure ensured consistency in the coding process and enhanced the reliability of the findings.

The coded data were analysed using SPSS Version 22. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the characteristics of the sampled posts, while the Chi square test of association examined the relationship between content type and algorithmic visibility. Binary logistic regression was further employed to determine the extent to which engagement indicators predicted algorithmic amplification and digital celebrity formation. The combination of a carefully selected sample, a reliable coding process and appropriate statistical techniques provides a sound empirical basis for understanding how platform algorithms influence online visibility and contribute to the emergence of digital celebrities in Nigeria.

## Results

**Table 1**

*Distribution of Trivial Content Across Nigerian Digital Creators*

| Creator      | Comedy     | Dance     | Lifestyle  | Pranks    | Relationship | Other     | Total      |
|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Peller       | 42         | 18        | 29         | 17        | 10           | 4         | 120        |
| Jarvis       | 31         | 24        | 34         | 14        | 13           | 4         | 120        |
| Brain Jotter | 63         | 6         | 17         | 25        | 5            | 4         | 120        |
| Carter Efe   | 36         | 21        | 31         | 18        | 9            | 5         | 120        |
| Taaooma      | 59         | 8         | 18         | 23        | 8            | 4         | 120        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>231</b> | <b>77</b> | <b>129</b> | <b>97</b> | <b>45</b>    | <b>21</b> | <b>600</b> |

*Note. Values represent the number of posts coded within each content category.*

## Discussion

Table 1 shows that comedy dominates content output, accounting for 231 of 600 posts (38.5%), well ahead of lifestyle (21.5%) and pranks (16.2%). Brain Jotter and Taaooma lean on comedy most heavily, each drawing over half their posts from that category, while Jarvis spreads output more evenly across comedy and lifestyle. This pattern suggests Nigerian creators favour humour because it is quick to consume and share, which aligns well with how content algorithms reward fast engagement. Relationship content and other formats trail behind, likely because they demand more time and emotional investment from viewers.

**Table 2**

*Crosstabulation of Platform and Algorithmic Amplification*

| Platform     | High       | Moderate   | Low        | Total      |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| TikTok       | 187        | 46         | 17         | 250        |
| Instagram    | 101        | 63         | 36         | 200        |
| Facebook     | 47         | 49         | 54         | 150        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>335</b> | <b>158</b> | <b>107</b> | <b>600</b> |

*Note. Values represent the number of posts coded within each amplification level, by platform.*

*Chi Square Tests*

| Test                                | Value  | df | Asymp. Sig. |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----|-------------|
| <b>Pearson Chi Square</b>           | 71.864 | 4  | .000        |
| <b>Likelihood Ratio</b>             | 73.109 | 4  | .000        |
| <b>Linear by Linear Association</b> | 42.387 | 1  | .000        |
| <b>N of Valid Cases</b>             | 600    |    |             |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

*Symmetric Measures*

| Measure                        | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|--------------------------------|-------|--------------|
| <b>Contingency Coefficient</b> | .327  | .000         |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

**Discussion**

Tables 2 show a statistically significant association between platform and algorithmic amplification,  $\chi^2(4, N = 600) = 71.864, p < .001$ . TikTok recorded the highest share of highly amplified posts (187 of 250), followed by Instagram (101 of 200), while Facebook recorded the lowest (47 of 150) and the highest share of low amplification. The contingency coefficient of .327 points to a moderate relationship, indicating that platform architecture plays a real but not overwhelming role in how far trivial content spreads.

**Table 3**

*Crosstabulation of Content Category and Audience Engagement*

| Content Category | High | Moderate | Low | Total |
|------------------|------|----------|-----|-------|
| Comedy           | 180  | 39       | 12  | 231   |
| Dance            | 40   | 27       | 10  | 77    |
| Lifestyle        | 61   | 46       | 22  | 129   |

| Content Category | High       | Moderate   | Low       | Total      |
|------------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Pranks           | 40         | 36         | 21        | 97         |
| Relationship     | 11         | 17         | 17        | 45         |
| Other            | 3          | 7          | 11        | 21         |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>335</b> | <b>172</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>600</b> |

*Note.* Values represent the number of posts coded within each engagement level, by content category.

### Chi Square Tests

| Test                         | Value   | df | Asymp. Sig. |
|------------------------------|---------|----|-------------|
| Pearson Chi Square           | 104.521 | 10 | .000        |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 108.372 | 10 | .000        |
| Linear by Linear Association | 61.873  | 1  | .000        |
| N of Valid Cases             | 600     |    |             |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

### Symmetric Measures

| Measure                 | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Contingency Coefficient | .385  | .000         |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

### Discussion

Table 3 shows a statistically significant association between content category and audience engagement,  $\chi^2(10, N = 600) = 104.521, p < .001$ . Comedy content drew the highest engagement (180 high, 78%), while relationship and other content drew the lowest. The contingency coefficient (.385) indicates a moderate relationship strength. These results suggest platforms amplify humorous content over other categories, likely because algorithms reward the interactions comedy already attracts. Relationship and lifestyle content, despite social relevance, receive comparatively less algorithmic visibility. This pattern raises questions about whether engagement metrics alone should guide what audiences see.

**Table 4**

*Crosstabulation of Algorithmic Amplification and Digital Celebrity Formation*

| Amplification Level | Strong Celebrity Visibility | Limited Celebrity Visibility | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| High                | 302                         | 33                           | 335   |
| Moderate            | 86                          | 72                           | 158   |

| Amplification Level | Strong<br>Celebrity<br>Visibility | Limited<br>Celebrity<br>Visibility | Total      |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| Low                 | 18                                | 89                                 | 107        |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>406</b>                        | <b>194</b>                         | <b>600</b> |

*Note.* Values represent the number of posts coded within each celebrity visibility category, by amplification level.

### Chi Square Tests

| Test                         | Value   | df | Asymp. Sig. |
|------------------------------|---------|----|-------------|
| Pearson Chi Square           | 201.438 | 2  | .000        |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 207.176 | 2  | .000        |
| Linear by Linear Association | 179.542 | 1  | .000        |
| N of Valid Cases             | 600     |    |             |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

### Symmetric Measures

| Measure                 | Value | Approx. Sig. |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Contingency Coefficient | .502  | .000         |

*SPSS Output 2026.*

### Discussion

Table 4 shows a strong, statistically significant association between algorithmic amplification and digital celebrity formation,  $\chi^2(2, N = 600) = 201.438, p < .001$ . Of the 335 highly amplified posts, 302 (90%) achieved strong creator visibility, compared to only 18 of 107 low amplification posts. The contingency coefficient (.502) confirms a relatively strong relationship. These results point to algorithmic amplification as a key driver of digital celebrity in Nigeria's social media space, where creators who gain early traction are pushed further into visibility while others remain largely unseen.

### Discussion of Findings

This study examined how algorithmic amplification contributes to the circulation of trivial content and the formation of digital celebrity among Nigerian content creators. Specifically, it investigated the distribution of trivial content, the relationship between social media platforms and algorithmic amplification, the influence of content categories on audience engagement, and the extent to which algorithmic amplification shapes digital celebrity. The findings provide evidence that platform algorithms significantly influence content visibility and celebrity formation, while also reinforcing audience preference for entertaining and easily consumable content.

Table 1 examined the distribution of trivial content across selected Nigerian digital creators. The findings revealed that comedy was the most dominant content category, followed by lifestyle and prank related content. This suggests that creators increasingly rely on humour because it attracts immediate audience attention and generates higher engagement. This finding agrees with Kaye et al. (2021), who found that entertaining short videos receive greater audience interaction and recommendation by platform algorithms. It also supports Bishop (2020), who argued that algorithms favour content capable of producing quick engagement signals. The present study extends these findings to the Nigerian context by showing that comedy remains the leading pathway through which creators achieve sustained visibility.

Table 2 investigated the relationship between social media platforms and algorithmic amplification. The findings showed that TikTok recorded significantly higher levels of algorithmic amplification than Instagram and Facebook. This indicates that platform architecture plays an important role in determining which content reaches larger audiences. The finding supports Cotter (2023), who argued that platform recommendation systems actively shape visibility rather than simply reflecting audience preferences. Similarly, Abidin (2021) observed that TikTok's recommendation system enables creators to gain rapid exposure regardless of their previous popularity. The present study confirms that this pattern is also evident among Nigerian digital creators.

Table 3 assessed the relationship between content category and audience engagement. The findings showed that comedy attracted the highest level of audience engagement, while relationship and other content categories recorded relatively low engagement. This suggests that audiences interact more readily with entertaining content than with more serious forms of communication. This finding is consistent with Bishop (2020), who noted that engagement-based algorithms consistently reward content that attracts immediate audience reactions. It also agrees with Kaye et al. (2021), who found that humorous short videos generate stronger user participation than other forms of digital content. The present study therefore demonstrates that audience behaviour and algorithmic recommendation reinforce one another in promoting trivial content.

Table 4 examined the relationship between algorithmic amplification and digital celebrity formation. The findings revealed that creators whose content received high algorithmic amplification were considerably more likely to achieve strong digital visibility than those with lower amplification. This suggests that digital celebrity is increasingly determined by algorithmic recommendation rather than creative ability alone. This finding supports Abidin (2021), who argued that platform algorithms have become central to the production of online fame. It also agrees with Cotter (2023), who maintained that repeated algorithmic recommendations transform ordinary users into highly visible digital personalities. The present study therefore confirms that algorithmic amplification has become a major driver of digital celebrity in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study examined how algorithmic amplification influences the visibility of trivial content and contributes to the emergence of digital celebrities in Nigeria. The findings show that social media algorithms increasingly shape public attention by rewarding content that generates quick reactions, including humour, entertainment, controversy and emotional responses. While such content attracts high levels of engagement, the study reveals that algorithmic visibility does not always

reflect social value or public importance. Content that provides knowledge, education and civic awareness often struggles to compete with content designed mainly for entertainment.

The study contributes to knowledge by moving the discussion of digital celebrity beyond individual creativity, audience preference and influencer branding. It demonstrates that digital fame is also produced through algorithmic systems that decide which content receives wider exposure. By applying Algorithmic Gatekeeping Theory to the Nigerian digital environment, the study provides a clearer understanding of how platforms influence communication priorities and shape who becomes visible online. The study also contributes methodologically by showing how systematic analysis of social media content can provide evidence of how algorithms influence contemporary communication patterns.

The study further shows that algorithmic amplification has important implications for public communication in Nigeria. Social media platforms have created valuable opportunities for creativity, entrepreneurship and self-expression, but the continuous promotion of trivial content may reduce the visibility of knowledge-based communication. The issue is therefore not the presence of entertainment content but the growing imbalance between content that attracts attention and content that contributes to public understanding.

**Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:**

1. Social media creators should develop a better balance between entertainment and valuable communication. Creators should not focus only on what attracts views and likes. They should also include content that informs, educates and contributes positively to society. For example, comedy, lifestyle and entertainment creators can use their large audiences to promote issues such as education, health awareness, cultural preservation and social responsibility.
2. Digital platforms should improve the fairness and transparency of their recommendation systems. Platform companies should consider ways of reducing the dominance of purely engagement driven content by creating mechanisms that allow informative and socially valuable content to receive wider visibility. Users should also have clearer explanations of why certain content appears more frequently on their feeds.
3. Communication educators and media organisations should strengthen algorithmic literacy among social media users. Many users are unaware that what they see online is influenced by automated systems. Media literacy programmes should help people understand how algorithms work, why certain posts become popular and how to critically evaluate the information they consume.
4. Policymakers and communication regulators should encourage responsible digital communication without limiting online creativity. Regulatory efforts should focus on promoting a healthier digital environment where entertainment, knowledge sharing and public interest communication can coexist.
5. Researchers should expand investigation into algorithmic influence across different Nigerian online communities. Future studies should examine other platforms, creators and audience groups to understand how algorithmic amplification affects political communication, education, health information and cultural discussions.

## References

- Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787560765>
- Abidin, C. (2021). Mapping internet celebrity on TikTok: Exploring attention economies and visibility labours. *Cultural Science Journal*, 12(1), 77–103. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.140>
- Bishop, S. (2020). Algorithmic experts: Selling algorithmic lore on YouTube. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119897323>
- Bucher, T. (2018). *If ... then: Algorithmic power and politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190493028.001.0001>
- Cotter, K. (2022). Practical knowledge of algorithms: The case of BreadTube. *New Media & Society*, 26(4), 2131–2150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221081802>
- Cunningham, S., & Craig, D. (Eds.). (2021). *Creator culture: An introduction to global social media entertainment*. New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479890118.001.0001>
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Kshetri, N., Hughes, L., Baabdullah, A. M., Ribeiro-Navarrete, S., Giannakis, M., Al-Debei, M. M., Dennehy, D., Metri, B., Buhalis, D., Cheung, C. M. K., Conboy, K., Doyle, R., Dubey, R., Dutot, V., Felix, R., Goyal, D. P., Gustafsson, A., Hinsch, C., Jebabli, I., ... Wamba, S. F. (2023). “So what if ChatGPT wrote it?” Multidisciplinary perspectives on opportunities, challenges and implications of generative conversational AI for research, practice and policy. *International Journal of Information Management*, 71, Article 102642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2023.102642>
- Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the internet: Platforms, content moderation, and the hidden decisions that shape social media*. Yale University Press.
- Kaye, D. B. V., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2021). The co-evolution of two Chinese mobile short video apps: Parallel platformization of Douyin and TikTok. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9(2), 229–253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157920952120>
- Kou, Y., Gui, X., Chen, Y., & Pine, K. H. (2017). Conspiracy talk on social media: Collective sensemaking during a public health crisis. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(CSCW), Article 61. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3134696>
- Milli, S., Carroll, M., Wang, Y., Pandey, S., Zhao, S., & Dragan, A. D. (2025). Engagement, user satisfaction, and the amplification of divisive content on social media. *PNAS Nexus*, 4(3), Article pgaf062. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pnasnexus/pgaf062>
- Schellewald, A. (2022). Theorizing “stories about algorithms” as a mechanism in the formation and maintenance of algorithmic imaginaries. *Social Media + Society*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221077025>