

Platformization in the Journalism Industry: Starting Points, Trends, and Consequences

Kramara Jonisová, E., Oprala, B., & Radošinská, J. (2025). *Platformization in the journalism industry: Starting points, trends, and consequences*. Wolters Kluwer.

Lenka Šamajová

Journalism is taking on a new dimension as a result of the rapid technological changes that have taken place in the 21st century. Journalists, similarly to professionals active in other industries, have had to adapt their profession in recent years. One of the key changes is automation, which is currently being discussed mainly in connection with the advent of artificial intelligence. The journalistic community is thus faced with a number of ethical dilemmas related to its use.

The discussion also opens up changes in the way journalistic content is disseminated and created, as well as the reception of information and the degree of involvement on the part of recipients. While in the past, media audiences sought news through traditional forms of media, today there are other communication channels, for example social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, which have largely replaced legacy media outlets. At the same time, the recipients of content are also becoming its creators. This issue is thoroughly explored in the monograph *Platformization in the journalism industry: Starting points, trends, and consequences*. In four chapters, it explains the principles and consequences of the era of multi-platform journalism, which directly affect not only the work of journalists, but also the engagement of the recipients themselves.

In the first chapter, the authors focus on the economic context of applying platform principles in the journalism industry. As they point out, the traditional media are currently facing a crisis for several reasons. These include, for example, media market saturation and the unstoppable decline in revenues, circulation, and readership of print media, which is closely linked to layoffs in the traditional journalism segment. Another problem is mistrust of the mainstream media, which is intensifying the journalism industry's struggle for economic viability and cultural identity.

The shift of recipients away from traditional forms of media is to some extent related to the monetisation of content, which is intended to support independent and high-quality journalistic information in an era of disinformation. In this context, the authors point to another negative impact: media audiences are often unwilling to pay for content and prefer social media as a communication channel, where news content is available free of charge. In many cases, however, there is a lack of professionalism, which can lead to dissemination of false information. The discussion also opens up the question of how these platforms collect information about their users. While this data is invaluable to the industry in terms of economics and marketing, publishers face another problem in that they know less about their audience than social media platform operators.

The connection between traditional media and platforms also creates further challenges for media moguls. Although it is a well-established system whereby traditional media present their content on social media, publishers are still looking for a fair way to be compensated by their operators. This can be compared to the music or film industries, where artists and creative employees are underpaid in relation to the distribution of their products through digital platforms, services, and portals.

The above findings, supplemented by specific practical examples, help readers to better understand the issues shaping contemporary journalism. They can also apply them in the following chapters, which will further expand their knowledge of the individual principles and consequences of applying multi-platform journalism.

In the second chapter, the authors explain the monetization of news content. Although this concept has been associated with current trends in journalism in recent years, its origins date back much earlier, to the global financial crisis of 2007–2008. As the authors point out, publishers had to find a way to obtain funding for online news content,

Reviews

so they began to apply the principles of paid and measured access in the form of mandatory registration via e-mail address, paid archives, premium content based on subscription, or crowdfunding. As outlined in the previous chapter, readers are unhappy with the idea of paid content, as a result of which publishers and editors are trying to adapt the principles of monetisation into a more “acceptable” form, such as payment per article. However, even this is not the most effective method, as it can have a negative impact on advertising revenue. One-time or short-term subscriptions cannot provide detailed information about subscribers, which means they cannot be offered to advertisers.

The authors also share an optimistic vision in relation to this issue. Given the deepening political polarisation and the dynamic spread of unreliable content generated by artificial intelligence, a steady but slow increase in online subscriptions is expected. However, despite this, the question of how to monetise online news most effectively remains unanswered.

In addition to issues related to monetisation, the authors also define other challenges the journalism industry is confronted with in this chapter. These include, for example, the active avoidance of news stories that are closely related to the gender gap in news coverage between women and men. The authors illustrate this phenomenon with the example of the so-called double burden of women, which is related to the conflict between paid employment and unpaid domestic work.

The third chapter deepens readers’ knowledge of the era of journalism actively operating through digital and social media. While in the past social media platforms were classified as supplementary communication channels, their function can today be considered key in terms of informing users about current news. Editorial offices are thus forced to adapt their content to the logic of individual platforms through which they can reach a wide audience. In this context, the authors discuss changes in the editorial profession. The traditional model of an editor has changed to that of a multi-platform creator whose competencies are much broader than those of their predecessors. In addition to adapting to the digital environment, they also face another challenge in the form of the blurring of boundaries between work and leisure time. After defining the role of the hypermodern journalist, the authors also clarified terms such as citizen journalist, “newsfluencer” and celebrity journalist, which also dominate the current journalism industry. At the same time, they return to the question of a new economic model in multi-platform journalism. Readers will thus expand their knowledge of the monetisation of news content from previous chapters, supplementing it with new ways of charging for individual content. These include, for example, crowdfunding, native advertising, branded content, and programmatic advertising.

The conclusion of the third chapter is related to the ethical and legal challenges of contemporary multi-platform journalism. These include the secure handling of digital data and sensitive information, manipulated images and videos created using deepfake technologies, the dissemination of false and alarming information, and transparent communication between the media and the public. Journalists are therefore responsible not only for creating content, but also for its accuracy, both factually and morally.

The fourth and final chapter deals with the technological aspects of contemporary multi-platform journalism. It reflects on the rapid technological progress to which editors have had to adapt their work in recent years. In this section of the monograph, the authors focus on robotic journalism, the use of artificial intelligence in journalism, and the popularisation of the principles of mobile journalism. As they point out, the automation of journalistic practices began even before the advent of artificial intelligence, based on the use of the principles of robotic journalism. Based on automated systems, editorial offices are able to generate hundreds to thousands of news stories every day, the creation of which requires structured data processing. This includes information about sports, economics, elections, and the weather. To better understand this phenomenon, the authors supplement their theoretical knowledge with examples from global media outlets that use various automated systems to generate individual news items. However, the advent of artificial intelligence has fundamentally changed the automation process, provoking further discussion on journalistic ethics.

In connection with technological progress, the authors mention mobile journalism, which has also fundamentally influenced the perception of journalists’ work. News is no longer created exclusively in newsrooms, but directly at the scenes of events, in real time. However, this phenomenon also raises a number of critical questions. Given that content creators are not only journalists but often the recipients themselves, an ethical conflict arises between journalistic values and the logic of platforms. The authors reflect on this using the example of the assassination of American

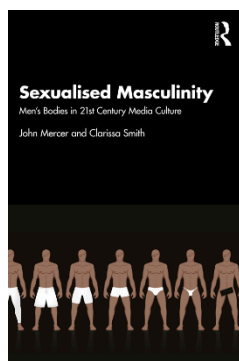
Reviews

political commentator and activist Charlie Kirk, the uncensored version of which, without context or warning about sensitive content, went viral on social media. However, they also pointed to situations where mobile journalism has become an important element in citizen journalism and human rights documentation. One example is the death of George Floyd, which was documented by a random passerby. The video became key evidence in the related criminal proceedings and sparked a wave of global mass protests.

The publication is beneficial in several areas. It is an effective educational supplement to the subject of Multiplatform Journalism, which is taught at our faculty. We appreciate that the authors use specific examples, which helps to better understand the era of multi-platform journalism. Students can thus expand their knowledge via lectures and seminars, which can help them later in practice. If they understand the challenges and forms of contemporary multiplatform journalism during their studies, this can also benefit the journalistic environment itself in terms of the ethical quality of news coverage. The individual chapters may also be useful for media enthusiasts or media professionals who are interested in the subject. We also consider it positive that the publication is written in English, thanks to which it can also attract the attention of potential readers living abroad.

Acknowledgement: The review was elaborated within the research project supported by the Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development, and Youth of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (VEGA) No. 1/0014/25, titled "Digital Transformation of Traditional Media Industries: Economic, Socio-Cultural and Legal Consequences of the Platform Media Economy".

Mgr. Lenka Šamajová, Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic



Sexualised Masculinity: Men's Bodies in 21st Century Media Culture

Mercer, J., & Smith, C. (2025). *Sexualised masculinity: Men's bodies in 21st century media culture*. Routledge.

Veronika Šašalová

Talking about male sexualisation is still somewhat uncomfortable. There is a fairly clear discourse about women, where the male gaze and way of sexualising characters, neglecting acting performances in films and TV dramas is criticised. Perhaps because of these discussions, it is much harder to admit that the first sex icons were men, and many actors based their careers more on sex appeal than on acting talent. John Mercer and Clarissa Smith have set themselves the difficult task of presenting the ways in which the male body is projected in the media. The book includes more than just feminist and queer theories, and is able to communicate ideas of male sexualisation outside of the crisis of masculinity. The very discussion about the crisis of masculinity often slips towards the conclusion that whenever female protagonists are on the rise and women are given more power, masculinity finds itself in crisis. The book instead manages to separate these two discussions and, from a historical perspective, examines how the performance and experience of masculinity changes over time, draws on old patterns, and responds to new technologies and social platforms, and does not avoid the current phenomena of influencers and portals such as OnlyFans. The book covers not only the practices of commercial creators, but also and especially the ways in which

Reviews

these methods are reproduced and integrated into ordinary everyday experience and self-presentation. An important part of the book is not only the images, but also the ways in which we are able to talk about sex.

The “Introduction: Masculinity, sex and sexualisation” and the first chapter “Sex talk: Vocabularies of sex and models and patterns of masculinity” represent a dense theoretical framework for how the issue itself can be approached differently. At the same time, the difficulty of grasping the basic concepts is shown. The texts lack a clear definition of masculinity, which is largely understandable if we are trying to maintain a view of masculinity as a whole, clearly distinguishable from its extreme heteronormative form or queer and drag performances. However, what is shown here is a very useful historical overview of the depiction of masculinity, especially through period magazines, which allows authors to access the language through which male objectification is created. This is very important, especially for later sections that deal with social media and the ways in which the audiences talk about male bodies. The chapter also manages to create a categorisation of tropes that are historically seen in media production – from where the heterosexual male figure evolves, through metrosexuals, pansexuals, and the sexualisation of hipster culture, which naturally leads the chapter into the next part – the sexualisation of men in Hollywood. The chapter mainly creates a historical cross-section and focuses on sex symbols during different eras. In this respect, the chapter lacks modern representation of these trends, as there are very few recent examples in this chapter. Even Marvel productions themselves, which the book mentions in later parts, could be analysed as separate research in the development of the depiction of the male body. However, as the authors add, the book is intended to inspire further detailed research.

The next two chapters, “Aspirational bodies: Health, fitness and the body project” and “The fashion and beauty body”, are strongly interconnected. The authors mainly discuss contemporary culture, which is strongly focused on exercise, a healthy lifestyle and the beauty of the body. Similar narratives promoted by contemporary influencers are shown here, targeting both male and female audiences. The presentation of a developed and vital male body is given the connotation of success and a good family. The narrative is always associated with a difficult beginning – either as a child who suffered from being overweight or as a scrawny young man, where we can find an analogue of the postfeminist slogans “You can have it too!” It shows a form of masculinity that is attractive to large audiences and at the same time opens the door to many products that would otherwise be at odds with what is normally associated with masculinity. The book also discusses men’s make-up and openness to fashion, which is of course also associated with many fashion icons and perfume brands. At the same time, however, it does not avoid paradoxes such as the narrative around erection-enhancing products, where masculinity is built on sexual vitality, which can also be achieved through medicine.

The later chapter then returns to the sexualisation of father figures and the issue of ageism in media culture. The book follows up on the issue of fatherly characters, which are, through the prism of feminism, a logical breakdown of the depiction of gender roles. Within the said discourse, we often talk about male characters who gradually gained greater emotionality and were able to open up issues that are uncomfortable in mainstream media content. On the other hand, we arrive at a heteronormative view of the world, where the functioning of, for example, homosexual couples is omitted. This chapter also points out the projection of politicians like Donald Trump into the positions of “daddy” figure. Although these passages provide valuable ideas for understanding contemporary culture, they somewhat disrupt the logical organisation of the book.

So far, the review has omitted the chapter that deals with queer representations of masculinity, which covers many forms of sexualised masculinity through different eras, and from those historical frames extends into contemporary media culture. The chapter is built mainly on the production of music videos and the contribution of Eurovision to queer production. In this regard, the fact that this chapter does not unnecessarily overwhelm the reader with theory can be seen as a positive. Through content analysis, the chapter describes many forms of sexualisation of queer content as well as the approach to non-binary sexuality. Examining a phenomenon like One Direction, it shows how personas that are intended to reach wide audiences are built in the music industry.

The last chapter outlines the economy of digital space and the blurring of the private and public body. The book outlines many trends from selfies, working with filters, AI, to platforms like OnlyFans, through which it also touches on the topic of pornography.

Reviews

The reviewed book represents a good basis for further research in many areas. Even though it touches on a plethora of different topics, the book paradoxically does not seem shallow and show consistent quality and informativity. The text references and intersects in many themes, showing that individual media spaces influence each other, while others offer less frequent depictions. “We have traced the evolution of the male body from a symbol of power and authority to a commodified object of desire, revealing new dimensions of masculinity that were previously marginalised or obscured.” (p. 220) It is no longer valid that the man is the one who looks and the woman is look-at-ness. Especially in content created by men for men, it is important to perceive the changes in the media space, where the body becomes the centre of attention and desire.

Acknowledgement: The outcome is a part of research project FPPV-38-2026 named: Applying interpretive practices to independent game creation: A feminist and contextual studies perspective – case studies

Mgr. Veronika Šašalová, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic



Local Perspectives on Strategic Communication: Reviewing Hejlová's Strategic Communication

Hejlová, D. (2025). *Strategická komunikace*. Karolinum.

Barbora Štěpánová

The book *Strategic communication* is the first complete overview of this field in the Czech Republic. It categorises existing theories. The principal added-value of the book, which extends beyond local enrichment of publications and makes it an interesting addition to international research, lies in its focus on Czech specifics. The book situates existing theories and research within the Czech and Central European contexts, presenting local case studies, considering historical development and impact, and highlighting the different challenges the Czech Republic (and other Central and Eastern European countries) face in the geopolitical context. The book is also notably relevant – it mentions AI, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the rise of social media, and new security risks.

The book formally consists of three (but perhaps five) main parts. The first part reflects on the context and starting points of strategic communication. The second part focuses on formalising strategic communication as a field of science within the context of other social sciences. The third part emphasises practice methodology and strategies, evaluation, and outcomes. Presented as part of this third section are also the specifics of commercial strategic communication and government, states, public strategic communication and strategic communication of government and states. Each part is also summarised in a brief text section at the end of each chapter.

It is important to state that the textbook is primarily intended for students of Bachelor's and Master's degrees and should serve as study material, bringing overall insight into the field of strategic communication. The secondary goal is also to legitimise strategic communication as a scientific field that deserves to be studied in academia. In addition to the dominant theories, the book is supplemented by various case studies.

At the beginning of the book, the author clearly states the paradigm, dividing the two dominant perspectives – security studies and media studies – and how they both examine the topic from different angles. Then she mentions

Reviews

other scientific disciplines that played a role in developing the field and which influenced the research. The book extends the Western conception of existing theory to the Eastern European context.

The book primarily consists of an overview of existing literature and research, connecting theories across the spectrum of strategic communication, and then highlighting key points in selected case studies. The primary literature consists of Drucker, Zarfass, Norris, Thaler, McQuel, Grunig and Grunig, Cutlip, Coombs, and other leading researchers. The publication is also accompanied by tables and schemes authored by the writer herself.

In certain parts, the book can be very descriptive; however, considering the main target group, the approach is adequate and well-conceived methodologically. At some points, the book can be slightly more challenging to navigate in the categorisation of contexts, which are also mentioned multiple times throughout the whole book – which, on one hand can be repetitive, but on the other hand, increases the book's potential as teaching material, and individual chapters can also be used as stand-alone entry-level lectures.

The book also skilfully categorises and explains the main terminology of the field, making it a valuable introductory tool to (not only) strategic communication studies. The book is also, at certain moments, overly cautious in formulating clear statements. The author presents her deductions and arguments thoroughly, describing the theories in question, guiding the reader through the process of considering these connections, and then logically arriving at a conclusion. However, the author then formulates her findings very cautiously, whereas for better understanding and clarity, the book could benefit from more striking and concrete statements and summaries.

At the same time, some chapters (e.g., behavioural economy, political context) are formulated in a broader context but could benefit from a more specific, in-depth approach (e.g., by inviting contributions from co-authors from the field). The book occasionally employs a somewhat journalistic style. Case studies are a welcome addition that puts the theory into context, although some of the selected cases may be rather overused in academia (Cambridge Analytica, Google). However, they are well balanced by the very specific and recent (yet more unconventional) examples.

The author also presents the existing literature and theories effectively, placing them clearly within their historical development and broader context, providing high-quality overviews, and articulating the specific limitations of the given theories and perspectives. The methodology of the overview is tailored to the audience. However, in some instances, the terminology could be more challenging or present more demanding connections (e.g., the WEIRD concept could be elaborated on in more detail, particularly in the context of ethics, and the connection to Image Repair theory could be highlighted).

Within the academic research environment, the publication is somewhat superficial, briefly touching on current research without presenting a broader spectrum of current researchers. The ongoing research is presented in general terms without specific references. However, according to the introduction, the book does not have such ambitions; its sole aim is to introduce novice students and the professional community to the context, and it fulfils its role as teaching material for students adequately, providing a suitable foundation and broader context, and appropriately reflects the author's approach to studying the field at her academic institution. Overall, the book also effectively fulfils its role as a defence of the need for academic research in strategic communication.

The author also presents a compelling argument and effectively defends the emergence of the field, explaining the broader context and the evolution from public relations to strategic communication and related disciplines. What makes the book unique is its specific definition of PR as distinct from strategic communication, how these two fields have crystallised, and what now distinguishes them.

The publication holds an irreplaceable position in the current environment because it provides the first comprehensive overview of the topic, integrated into the broader context, and covers almost every aspect of strategic communication studies in Czechia. It is a helpful introduction to the field for students. As a student of the Master's programme of Strategic Communication at Charles University, I can also attest that this book closely follows the structure and lectures of this programme. From the international context, it offers an interesting perspective on Western-oriented theory from a Central and Eastern European viewpoint.

Mgr. Barbora Štěpánová, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Smetanovo nábřeží 6, 110 01, Prague, Czech Republic



Stories on Our Screens: Media Reflections of Hypermodern Society, Culture, and Everyday Life

Radošinská, J., & Hudíková, Z. (Eds.). (2025). *Stories on our screens: Media reflections of hypermodern society, culture, and everyday life*. Wolters Kluwer.

Lucia Furtáková

The edited volume *Stories on our screens: Media reflections of hypermodern society, culture, and everyday life* is an exceptional collective scholarly work in terms of its scope, scale, and composition. It seeks to encourage critical discussion about the social significance of media content in the hypermodern era. The publication's theoretical and conceptual framework fundamentally rests on the notion of hypermodern society and its implications for contemporary media production. In her introductory study, editor Jana Radošinská outlines the volume's core premise: narrative worlds in films, television series, digital games, and other media products not only reflect social change, but actively co-create it. She also highlights the volume's fundamental epistemological stance, stating that social meanings "are neither created by those who produce media content nor expressed by the content itself. Media content only initiates them or rather offers them to their audiences, and the individual audience members might experience different sets of social meanings while interpreting the same theme, narrative, or work" (p. 19). This statement carries direct methodological weight, as it suggests that research on media texts must necessarily include the audience as well as the text itself. It is also commendable that, in adopting this epistemological stance, the author does not remain at the level of abstract argumentation, but consciously opens the space for empirically oriented contributions from other authors. The edited volume thus brings together 18 chapters by 25 authors, divided into 3 thematic sections.

The first part, "Everyday struggles in the hypermodern age", focuses on the broader sociocultural implications of the hypermodern era, examining how contemporary audiovisual culture communicates the collective desires, fears, and values of 21st-century people. The authors explore themes of heroism, identity, and social norms, united by the belief that current media narratives actively help to shape their audience's value framework, rather than merely entertaining them. They pay particular attention to how popular audiovisual works respond to the hypermodern cultural environment, fostering deep emotional bonds between stories and their fans on the one hand, and reinterpreting traditional heroic archetypes within contemporary discourse on identity, moral ambiguity, and social change on the other. The authors raise the question of what hypermodern audiences expect from their media heroines and heroes, and how producers reflect these expectations, whether through the expansive, participatory world of the MCU, the subversive anti-heroine Wednesday, or the controversial remake of *Snow White*.

The second part, "Women, men, and families portrayed in film and TV", examines how current audiovisual and media productions depict men, women, children, and families. The authors reflect on the extent to which popular media reproduces or challenges established gender stereotypes, and on how these representations vary across genres and formats, from crime series and reality shows to K-dramas and animated children's programmes. This section primarily examines the tension between established patriarchal patterns and the gradual emancipation of female, male, and child characters in the media. It identifies how formats such as *Ruža pre nevestu* (the Slovak adaptation of *The Bachelor*) and dance reality shows like *Let's Dance* and *Stardance* continue to perpetuate traditional gender roles, while demonstrating how works such as *The Glory*, *Arcane*, *Nosferatu*, and *Adolescence* actively subvert or revise these patterns. These chapters all critically examine how media representations help shape social norms regarding gender identity, family relationships, and everyday life, and how this process is changing in the context of globalised audiovisual production.

Reviews

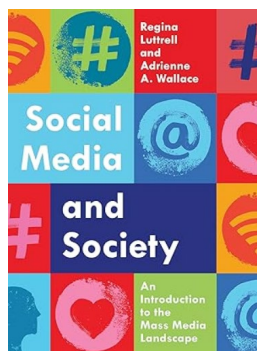
The third part, “Business and technological progress meeting hypermodern visuality”, focuses on the economic and technological aspects of current audiovisual production. In it, the authors examine how new technologies, digital tools, and commercial strategies are changing the nature of media products, and how they are created and received. They also reflect on the boundaries of authenticity, historical accuracy, and artistic integrity in an environment where generative AI, deepfake technologies, and sophisticated sound design are increasingly being incorporated into the creative process. Authors discuss these topics using specific examples ranging from video games (*Baldur’s Gate 3*, *Kingdom Come: Deliverance 2*) to animated works and television series (*Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, *The Lego Movie*, *The Mandalorian*) and the marketing communications of cultural institutions and reality shows. The authors are interested in understanding where artistic ambition and technological innovation intersect, the ethical dilemmas raised by the use of AI and deepfake in the entertainment industry, and the extent to which commercial interests influence the content and values conveyed by media products. Thus, concluding the volume, the section opens a broader discussion on the future of audiovisual production in the technologically transformed media environment of the 21st century.

In terms of coherence, the editors must be commended for coordinating such a large group of authors. The individual chapters employ a variety of methodologies, including qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, narrative and semiotic analysis, as well as case studies. It is precisely this methodological diversity that constitutes the publication’s strength, as it reflects the interdisciplinary nature of media and communication studies. The editors have maintained thematic coherence by ensuring that all contributions address a common question: How do media narratives communicate the collective and individual experiences of the hypermodern individual?

Stories on our screens: Media reflections of hypermodern society, culture, and everyday life maps the social, cultural, gender, and technological dimensions of current audiovisual production in a comprehensive and thematically rich manner. In doing so, it fulfils its main objective of contributing to a critical discussion of the social meanings conveyed by media content in the hypermodern era. While the publication is primarily intended for researchers and educators in the field of media and communication studies, its thematic breadth and accessible contributions also make it valuable for media professionals, film and television creators, and educated readers interested in current popular culture. I consider the publication’s interdisciplinary focus to be particularly valuable as it brings together narratological, cultural, gender, technological, and economic perspectives to provide a comprehensive view of hypermodern media culture. The edited book convincingly demonstrates that film and television productions, digital games, reality shows, and other forms of audiovisual production are not merely entertainment commodities; they also serve as mirrors to, and co-creators of, the value framework of today society. This idea, developed throughout the publication’s three sections, is highly relevant in the context of a rapidly changing media landscape in which streaming platforms, generative artificial intelligence, and the globalisation of audiovisual content are fundamentally altering the relationship between creators, stories, and audiences.

Acknowledgement: The review was elaborated within a national research project supported by the Grant Agency of the Ministry of Education, Research, Development, and Youth of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Sciences (VEGA) No. 1/0014/25, titled ‘Digital Transformation of Traditional Media Industries: Economic, Socio-Cultural and Legal Consequences of the Platform Media Economy’.

Mgr. Lucia Furtáková, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic



Social Media and Society: An Introduction to the Mass Media Landscape

Luttrell, R., & Wallace, A. A. (2024). *Social media and society: An introduction to the mass media landscape*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Nikolai Domashev

The present book fulfils two aims simultaneously. It provides a comprehensive overview of the field of social media, encompassing both its technological and societal dimensions. It also aims to demystify the internal day-to-day operations of online platforms, with the objective of encouraging readers to consider careers in this sector of the economy. In the following review I will first look into the ways in which the authors approach the complexities of social media. Subsequently, I will take note of an unfortunate lacuna in the composition of the material. I will conclude with certain recommendations derived from the book to assist individuals in becoming proficient and professional social media experts.

The sheer scale of social media, their ephemeral nature, and the rapidity with which information disseminates create an impression that they defy adequate explanations appropriate for lay audiences. However, specific theories do exist and help make sense of the vertiginously diverse forms of digital communication. These explanatory theories imbue the present book with analytical strength and vibrant spirit. One such theory is the Honeycomb Model, which offers a cogent depiction of seven major functionalities of social media. These functionalities effectively structure the social media experience for any user. To illustrate, consider the “sharing” dimension of the model. In this model, “sharing” refers to the degree to which contributing users can freely exchange information. Another salient functionality in this model is “groups”. This dimension refers to the capacity of users to form groups on social media platforms. In general, the Honeycomb Model enables an efficient and effective analysis of any social media platform along several meaningful axes.

Another influential theory demonstrates a holistic framework for managing strategic public relations in a company, known as the PESO model. The acronym PESO stands for the four types of media – Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned. Each constituent type or channel within the PESO model engages social media audiences to disseminate strategic messages in coordinated advertising, marketing, and communication efforts. The PESO model helps to reach the ultimate goal of creating trust in a company and keeping its reputation unblemished.

The lively conversation between various theories renders the contents of the present book more accessible and less overwhelming. Readers will easily follow the explanatory logic without the fear of getting embroiled in too much detail. Beyond its theoretical robustness, the book’s lucid structure merits attention. The first part unfurls the chronology of the mass media and navigates through the landscape of technical definitions. The second part examines the embeddedness of social media in diverse societal contexts, ranging from business to health to politics to entertainment. The third section, despite its brevity, functions as a foundational element for readers seeking to apply their knowledge in a practical setting. In other words, this part outlines the concrete tactics which help one to master social media, and to turn this expertise into a successful career. It certainly represents the highlight of the entire volume, since it clearly demonstrates the pathway from gained knowledge to professional growth.

Before proceeding to a discussion about the book’s major downside, let us look closely at the authors. Regina Luttrell currently serves as Senior Associate Dean at the Newhouse School of Public Communication at Syracuse University (Syracuse, New York), one of the best communication schools in the U.S. Its programme in Interactive Multimedia & Emerging Technology was ranked #1 in 2025. Luttrell has already authored an impressive gallery of books aimed at different audiences. Titles include *Gen Z: The superhero generation*, *Public Relations campaigns: An*

Reviews

integrated approach, and Trump tweets, the world reacts: Understanding what is relevant and why. Her co-author, Adrienne A. Wallace, is Associate Professor and Associate Director of the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University (Allendale, Michigan).

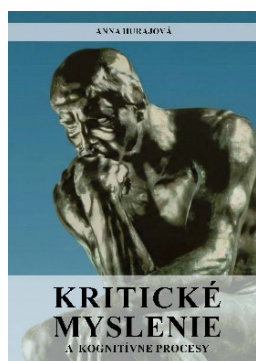
What appears to be the major flaw of the reviewed book stems from its exclusively U.S.-centric orientation. In other words, readers cannot find any extended discussions about social media as applied to geographical contexts outside of North America. While the authors extensively touch upon such giants as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter/X, the audiences might also be curious about social media endemic to other regions. Such prominent social media platforms as ShareChat (India), WeChat, and weibo (China) represent exciting opportunities to discern parallels with Western counterparts or to hypothesise about their significant differences.

Such criticism, however, meets two rebuttals. First, it is the social media companies established and run on American soil which disproportionately affect mass media landscapes around the world. They do so through directly engaging myriads of faithful users (Facebook alone boasts 3 billion monthly active users), as well as through setting up technological and logistical architectures which are later emulated by nascent social media companies in other countries. Second, if the current book features in a general course on American culture, then it stands as a perfect fit, since it analyses many contemporary phenomena characterizing the USA. As a case in point, in Chapter 8 titled “Entertainment and sports media”, the authors examine the social media acumen of the superstar Taylor Swift, who performed an audacious manoeuvre to repossess her music catalogue.

Overall, the book under consideration appears to be a commendable introductory textbook, suitable for undergraduate students pursuing degrees in communication, sociology, and anthropology. As a huge bonus, it would serve as a valuable resource for beginner bloggers who are apprehensive about embarking on their social media journeys. One particularly concrete recommendation stems from the discussion of various computer tools which enhance writing quality. Another detailed section delves into the cultivation of creativity, a skill that reigns supreme in the realm of social media.

Additionally, novices would find the sound career advice coupled with solid predictions about what computer-mediated communication holds in store for all of us to be particularly welcome. Overall, I recommend this book as reading for individuals seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current technological-societal nexus, as well as for those aiming to apply the knowledge gained for their own academic success or career advancement.

Nikolai Domashev, M.A., independent researcher, Budapest, Hungary



Critical Thinking and Cognitive Processes

Hurajová, A. (2025). *Kritické myslenie a kognitívne procesy*. Tribun EU.

Ol'ga Škvareninová

The information overload and increasing polarisation of public discourse make critical thinking one of the most vital epistemic competencies. In this context, publications that reflect on the processes of human thinking and offer tools for their improvement take on particular significance. One such comprehensive approach, linking theoretical foundations with practical strategies for developing critical thinking, is presented in the university textbook *Critical thinking and cognitive processes* by Anna Hurajová, an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Mass Media

Reviews

Communication at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, Slovakia. Developed under the KEGA grant project, which explores the risks and opportunities of education, the book directly helps individuals navigate the current information-saturated environment.

The structure of the publication follows a logical and progressive path, starting with general theory and continuing with the specifics of critical thinking and its practical application. In the first chapter, the author provides a detailed classification of basic types of thinking and mental operations – ranging from analysis and synthesis to more complex processes like divergence and convergence. This classification is vital, as it builds a solid theoretical foundation for a comprehensive understanding of critical thinking as a higher-order cognitive process. The plurality of classification criteria (developmental, content-based, logical, or functional) can be viewed positively, as it reflects the complexity of the subject matter. In doing so, the author avoids reductionist approaches and offers a multidimensional understanding of thinking.

The second chapter focuses on critical thinking itself, presenting it not only as a set of skills but also as an attitude towards information and the world. The author emphasises its importance in the context of media literacy, logic, source verification, and the identification of myths, which is particularly relevant in the environment of digital media and information overload. An important contribution to the interpretation of critical thinking lies in rejecting its reduction to scepticism; instead, the author understands it as an active process of selecting relevant information, which corresponds to current trends in cognitive psychology and pedagogy.

The third chapter is particularly valuable, as it focuses on tools and methods for developing critical thinking. Techniques such as philosophical razors, the Socratic method, six thinking hats, cinquain (a five-line “poem”), mind mapping, the 5W1H method, Osborn’s checklist, Sagan’s invisible dragon, and others, reinforce the practical dimension of the publication. The didactic value of the textbook is also enhanced by tasks, questions, and mental exercises that support active knowledge acquisition and the development of higher-order cognitive functions. The application of selected methods and exercises in the field of marketing represents a significant contribution.

Another relevant part of the textbook is Chapter 4, which focuses on cognitive biases. In this section, the author clearly outlines various heuristics and systematic errors in thinking that highlight the limits of human rationality. This aspect is key to understanding why critical thinking is not natural but must be consciously developed. The author explains the most well-known and common cognitive biases, e.g., confirmation bias, survivorship bias, authority bias, blind spot bias, choice-supportive bias, anchoring, priming, bandwagon effect, halo effect, ostrich effect, cognitive dissonance, clustering illusion, stereotyping, selective perception, binary perspective, and polarisation. For each of these, she provides a real-life example, questions, and practical exercises. This allows the reader to immediately identify a specific logical fallacy and test it in every-day situations.

The final two chapters focusing on facts and opinions, and on distinguishing between correlation and causation, effectively complement the overall concept of the book and respond to frequent problems in interpreting information in practice. In them, the author rightly draws attention to the risks of data misinterpretation and the tendency to confuse correlation with causation, which are amongst the most logical fallacies in both lay and professional discourse. These chapters can be considered particularly relevant in the context of the media environment and the spread of disinformation.

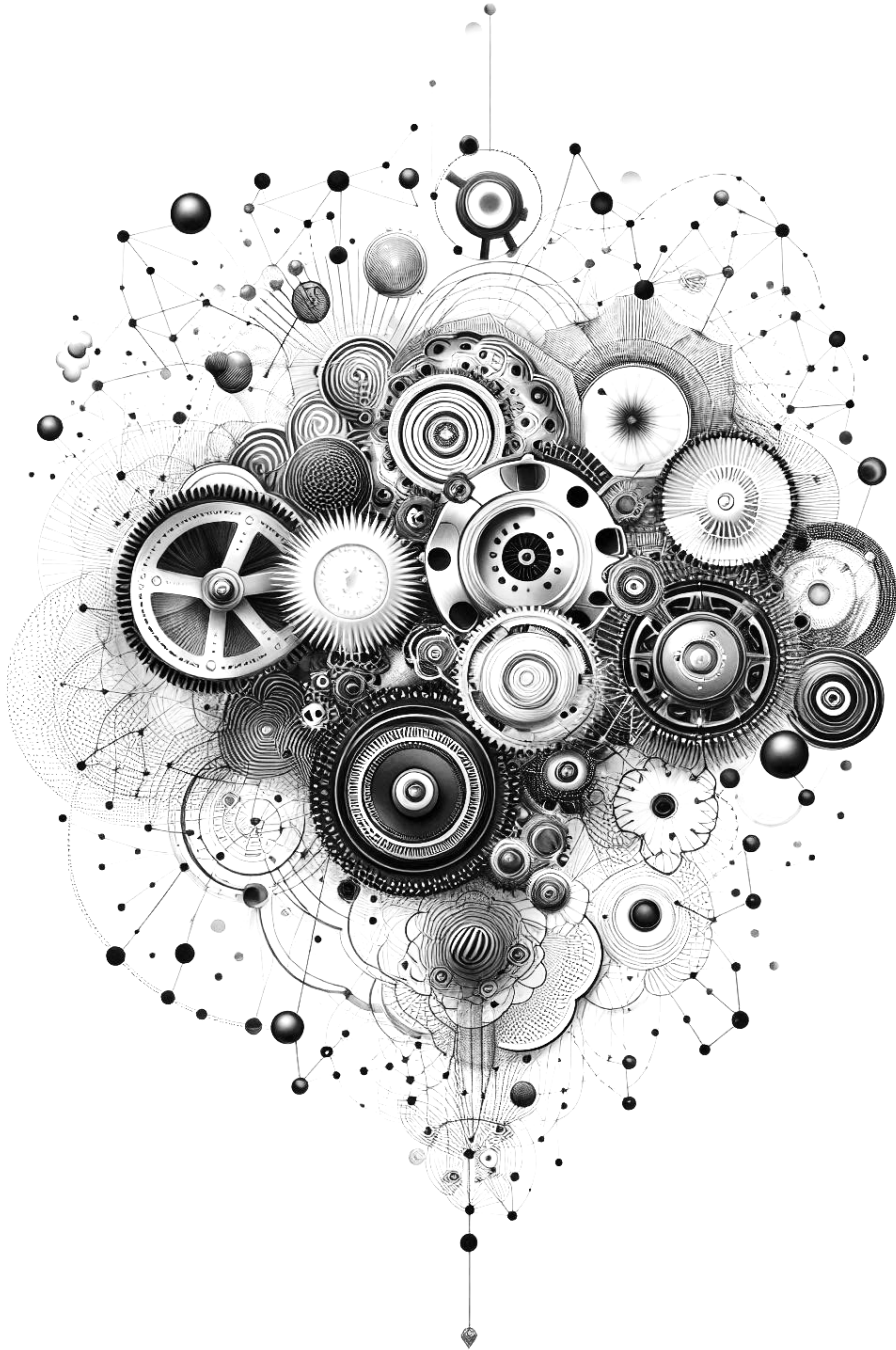
From a methodological perspective, the publication is based primarily on a synthesis of the literature, which is appropriate for a textbook. The author draws on existing theoretical approaches and organises them into a coherent whole. The aim is not to present original research but rather to make existing knowledge accessible in a didactic manner. The potential of the book lies in a more in-depth incorporation of empirical findings and more comprehensive analytical case studies. The language of the publication is technical and terminologically precise, yet accessible to a broader audience. The whole text is clear, logically organised, and readily understandable. Tables summarising key information also help make the text easier to follow.

In conclusion, Anna Hurajová’s textbook *Critical thinking and cognitive processes* represents a high-quality and comprehensive contribution to the field. Its value lies primarily in the systematisation of knowledge, terminological precision, a clear structure, and an emphasis on practical application. The book goes beyond a descriptive exposition and serves as a hands-on guide for teaching. This publication is suitable not only for students of the humanities and

Reviews

social sciences but also for a wider range of readers seeking to develop their critical thinking skills in the context of the current information reality.

PhDr. Oľga Škvareninová, PhD., Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Nám. J. Herdu 2, 917 01 Trnava, Slovak Republic



Current Retail Trends: Accessibility, Personalisation and Experience in the Shopping Process?

Jana Galera Matúšová

In recent years, the retail sector has undergone a significant transformation, driven mainly by the digitalisation of the economy, the growing importance of e-commerce, and dynamically changing consumer behaviour. Traditional stores are facing growing competition from online retailers, as well as pressure to optimise operating costs and make more efficient use of retail space. At the same time, customer expectations are changing, with customers increasingly seeking not only product availability, but also personalised communication, quality service, and a comprehensive customer experience that goes beyond the purchasing process itself. In response to these changes, the integration of online and offline sales channels, the use of customer data in strategic decision-making, and the implementation of new sales space concepts are coming to the fore. Despite the growing importance of digital sales platforms, however, stores continue to play a significant role in building brand identity and creating customer experience. It is the point of sale (POS) environment, its design, navigation system, and product presentation that can significantly influence brand perception and consumer purchasing decisions. Although considerable attention is paid in academic sources to the digitisation of retail and the development of e-commerce, less attention is paid to the connection between the physical sales environment and new forms of customer experience, and to building a community around the brand. In our contribution, we will therefore take advantage of our participation in the Super Retail Club conference and present current trends in retail that reflect the interconnection of technological solutions, point-of-sale design, and brand marketing communication.

Transformation of Retail Spaces

An important aspect of the current changes in the retail sector is the transformation of the sales areas themselves. Traditional store formats in shopping centres or on busy/commercial streets face several challenges. Currently, there are quite a few projects in which retail operates on several floors within shopping centres. On the other hand, shops on the high street close around 4 p.m., especially in smaller towns. Retail parks or smaller retail outlets in residential and administrative areas are becoming an alternative. However, these locations also have their own limitations. Residential areas are characterised by higher rental costs and, at the same time, limited time frames for potential customers, who are mainly there in the morning and evening. A similar situation occurs in business centres, where the highest concentration of people is during lunchtime, making these spaces better suited for businesses such as cafés, tobacconists, or pharmacies. In the current retail situation, technologies that enable retailers to sell even where they cannot employ real staff (e.g., various sales kiosks), the creation of pop-up stores, and the return of the old concept of mobile shops are significant aids. These concepts make it possible to bring sales closer to customers at the time and place where demand arises, for example, in university environments, where there is high purchasing power in terms of café products, but on the other hand, students are only at university at certain times and during certain periods of the year. Having a café in the university building all year round would be unprofitable for the operator, but a mobile café could solve this problem.

Today

Integration of Online and Offline Sales

The pandemic has significantly accelerated the development of e-commerce, which has also affected the operations of many retail brands. An interesting example is the MTBIKER brand, which was created as an online cycling marketplace. However, it gradually became apparent that the customer conversion journey often began online but ended in a store. Analysis of customer data enabled the company to identify locations suitable for opening physical stores, with accessibility and parking options proving to be key factors. Although approximately 95% of the brand's sales come from online orders, up to 40% of them are completed in stores in the form of personal collection.

Many retailers are also addressing pricing in the online and offline space and how to work with it. There are still many customers who assume that goods in the online space are cheaper than in retail stores. MTBIKER, for example, has dynamic pricing, which means that it looks at competitors' prices and adapts to market pricing, but this could be more challenging in offline spaces in terms of constant repricing. The solution is price tags with QR codes that link directly to the price of the goods in the online shop, which also applies in stores. The added value in the offline space is bicycle fitting and servicing, while shops can also be used to build communities – group rides, training sessions, and other events. Shops also serve as a venue for vendor marketing – temporary displays of specific brands and rental of shop space to vendors for various types of activities.

Personalisation as a Source of Value

The growing importance of personalisation is another significant trend in today's retail environment. Customers increasingly expect products or services to reflect their individual needs and preferences. One example is the Dajana Rodriguez brand, which approaches products not only as consumer goods, but also as potential carriers of personal meaning. The brand's handbags are designed as gift items that allow the giver to send a personalised message to the recipient. According to the brand's co-founder, Raul Rodriguez, this has had the following marketing impacts:

- differentiation from the competition,
- emotional connection,
- viral value and word of mouth,
- community building,
- long-term loyalty,
- premium brand perception.

The Shop as an Experiential Space

Growing competition from online retailers and pressure on prices are leading retail companies to look for new ways to increase the attractiveness of stores. One of the key approaches is to transform the sales area into an experiential environment. However, it appears that retailers today are unable to make effective use of their sales areas, with limits mainly in the design of shop windows, which can be considered the store's calling card. At the same time, a clear presentation of goods in a suitably lit shop window can help the brand convert passers-by into customers. If we talk about authenticity in many areas of marketing communication today, this also applies to points of sale. This ranges from the choice of colours and other elements that correspond to the character of the brand to the clear presentation of products without various distracting elements. Heidemarie Kriz, who has been working as an architect and shop designer for more than 25 years, also emphasises the importance of a navigation system that helps customers find their way around as soon as they enter. If this is missing and they are unable to ask any of the staff, it will discourage them from shopping. At the same time, she sees the potential of stores in that they can offer customers something they cannot find in e-shops, namely excellent advice, great service and beautiful product presentation combined with experiences for all the senses. Heidemarie Kriz defines the following trends and developments at the POS:

Today

- Experience – store design as experimental space (hospitality)



Source: Heidemarie Kriz presentation on conference Super Retail Club, 2026

- Art & Decoration – e.g., flowers (also important in shop windows)



Source: Heidemarie Kriz presentation on conference Super Retail Club, 2026

Today

- City DNA – know where you are (e.g., concept stores)



Source: Heidemarie Kriz presentation on conference Super Retail Club, 2026

- Community building
- Value – added services – e.g. repairs, personalisation, etc.
- Sustainability – embedded in store layout and materials and products

The author drew on her participation and presentations at the Super Retail Club conference, which took place on February 11, 2026.

Acknowledgment: Funded by the EUNextGenerationEU through the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia under the project No. 17104-04-V05-00045.