FILOLÓGIA.HU • XV. évfolyam (2024) 1–4. szám 3–18. • DOI: 10.59648/filologia.2024.1-4.1

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The 'Known Unknown': Changes in the Media over the Last Quarter Century (2000–2025)

Social media, generative AI, fake news and deepfake, influencer communication. Five concepts that have shaped the media landscape and market over the last 25 years. But how do they interact to form a system for describing changes in the media platforms, channels and content? Based on a review of the relevant literature (desktop research), the paper captures and describes four dominant paradigms of change that have emerged over the past quarter century, which have profoundly and irreversibly transformed our everyday practices, habits and attitudes in and through the media. These trends are: 1. changing media messages: the rise of autonomy and virtuality; 2. changing communities and audiences: the rise of personal agency; 3. changing information: the rise of the false; 4. changing representations: the rise of the artificial. The list of four we propose can, of course, be extended and narrowed. However, it is assumed that, by summarising them, we can see more clearly the phenomena and trends that characterise our present and draw conclusions for the future.

Keywords: media landscape, artificial intelligence, fake news, deepfake, influencer communication, virtual reality

1. Introduction

Alvin Toffler (1970) called the state of mind in which the modern man, even decades after his statement, still exists, a disease of change. We can describe this kind of consciousness as one in which we feel, experience, but do not yet fully understand and reflect on the imminence of some future state. One of the main sources and surfaces of these feelings and experiences, and thus of the 'disease' of change, is the media.

In what follows, we will capture and describe four dominant paradigms of change that have emerged over the last quarter of a century and that have profoundly and irreversibly transformed our everyday practices, habits and attitudes in and by the media. The list of these four can, of course, be extended and narrowed down. Nevertheless, it is assumed that they are sufficient to provide a clearer picture of the phenomena and trends that characterise our present and will allow us to draw conclusions for the future.

2. Changing media messages: The rise of autonomy and virtuality

The first quarter of the third millennium is marked by a major change in the media landscape. With the ubiquity of internet access, connectivity and interactivity, media have evolved from content service to social media. This has been in line with the development of general (industrial) technology, which has not only made its use more efficient, but has also infiltrated all aspects of everyday life, supporting not only human-to-human interaction but also the Internet of Things and deepening human-to-device relationships.

In twenty-five years, we can talk of at least two industrial revolutions – almost as many as in the previous two hundred years combined. If we look through the revolutions that have consolidated into civilisational-cultural operations, we see that the first – in the 18th century – was linked to machines, the next, in the 19th century, to consumption (mass production), and the 20th century to electronics and computerisation. By the first half of the 21st century, the use of digital systems reached its full potential, with the emergence of 'datafication' and data-driven information, and with it the fourth industrial revolution. Then came, as the fifth, the new turn: the use of artificially intelligent, autonomous programs and systems that triggered a major change, in which "man and machine are now metaphorically dancing together" (Gauri – Van Eerden 2019; Noble et al. 2022).

The media, which can be seen as the communication interface for all these technologies, has been transformed over the last twenty-five years from an information and communication system into a social medium, an autonomous communicator, a simulated being. Its most recent decades have been characterised by both mergers and fragmentation. After the turn of the millennium, the convergence of the media became more and more pervasive. It is a process whereby technologies that previously performed separate and distinct tasks are coming together to share tasks and resources. This is what the smartphone is doing, providing a range of functions with services available on a single device: from traditional content consumption to content creation, real-time interaction and telephony. But in the media world, it is not only the technologies that are converging, but also, for example, the companies operating multiple media and platforms (digital television, streaming, radio, online video sharing) that exemplify the convergence of the media economy. We can also talk about cultural convergence, whereby a given piece of content becomes available on multiple platforms, in multiple styles, with different levels of audience participation, but also the spill-over of media content into other areas of life (e.g. movie characters in toys for sale, cafes named after media content, etc.). Such phenomena as Bollywood or Nollywood (Indian or Nigerian film production mirroring Hollywood) or even film series that cross geographical and cultural boundaries in popularity, can be classified as global convergence. In some respects, we can also speak of genre convergence, for example in the case of news shared on social media platforms, which can be considered gossip, reporting or information.

The latter type is, in fact, a symptom of the way in which the content has changed alongside media technologies. Typically, one-way dissemination genres, which could be classified primarily according to the procedures and norms of the authors' and issuers' intentions, such as news, editorials, features or glossies, or reports, interviews and reports, have been replaced by so-called "content". The transition period in the 2010s was marked by a convergence of genres, such as infotainment or edutainment. When these hybrid frameworks became too narrow, the generalisation of content, which broke away from the general genre, became complete, along with the proliferation of user-generated content. At the same time, the number of qualified editors, journalists and content providers in the various media has declined: in the USA alone, the number of qualified editors, journalists and content providers halved between 2007 and 2014 (Hindman 2023: 143). Civic content no longer necessarily conforms to prior norms, and its use is determined by reuse, independent of the original intentions of the originator, as well as by rewriting or repetition, continuity, incompleteness and fluidity. Their spread is not radial but circular, they are characterised by velocity and decontextualisation, their code is language mixed with images, their experience is one of participation and immersion. Content is delineated not by its stylistic-formal features, but by its interactional functions, its platforms of representation, and perhaps its modes of capture. This is how new media content, the post, the comment, the tag, the reaction or even the podcast, the multimedia messages linked to different platforms (e.g. reels, TikTok videos) are created. In this way, media "new genres" are transformed from text into media objects.

The most recent stage in this process is the awakening of the media object itself, marked by the functioning of artificial intelligence: simulation and virtualisation. This gives content in the digital space its own voice, face, personality, thoughts and opinions. Media content becomes a meaningful partnership, an object becomes an agent: an avatar, a virtual friend or a companion. This time, we can no longer talk about genres, but about levels and qualities of action, about the degree of autonomy in media communication: interactions between human and program on an equal footing or perceived as such. The change is accompanied by the emancipation of the former receiver of the message, from reader–watcher–listener to content producer and binge-consumer (e.g. those who watch a series of films in one sitting), digesting when, what and how they choose. Media channels are becoming spaces and platforms where 'behavioural' rules determine simultaneous participation. Conventionality, globalisation (emojis, gifs and the use of English), multimedialisation and the experience of movement, of a constant present time of here and now, permeate the media. In this new communicative environment, attention and emotion, relationships become monetisable ("cognitive capitalism", the "like economy", dating apps, etc.), habits become patternable, and people become observable, traceable and imitable at every moment.

This also describes a general path that leads the history of the web from the information library to thinking intelligence: from web 1.0, through interactive web 2.0 and semantically interpretive web 3.0, to web 4.0, the virtual alternative living space. And three of these four phases are mostly from the last quarter century. And we are certainly not at the end of this story.

3. Changing communities and audiences: The rise of personal agency

The use of social media is so pervasive in our society that it is easy to forget that it has only been spreading globally for less than two decades. MySpace launched in 2003, Facebook in 2004, Twitter in 2006, Instagram in 2010, Pinterest and Snapchat in 2011, TikTok in 2016. That means that in 2025, the oldest widely used social networking site will be just over 20 years old. However, during these two decades, social networking sites have undeniably left their mark on society, on communication behaviour and on ways of thinking (cf. Veszelszki 2017b, 2017c). Danah Boyd (2010: 39) speaks of networked publics, i.e. public spaces that have been transformed and restructured by network technologies.

New technological devices (especially smartphones) allow us to create a narrative of our whole lives: through the content we capture and publish, we can choose what is worth remembering, what contributes to our own story (cf. Renner 2019). However, some online (mainly visual) content is not necessarily about remembering, but rather about sharing experiences (Jurgenson 2019). This tendency is reinforced by ephemeral, or temporary, disappearing content, such as Snapchat messages, Instagram Stories videos or even ephemeral posts made at the moment of notification in the BeReal app.

The likes attached to content have become a new measure of value, a new manifestation of emotional relationships. "…the remediation of social relations that has accompanied the rise of consumer culture has effectively managed to transform the nature of affect, from something private or at least located in small interaction systems, to something that acquires an objective existence as a value creating 'substance' in the public domain. Social media have taken this process one step further" (Arvidsson 2011). In the sharing economy, "the social is of particular economic value, as user interactions are instantly transformed into comparable forms of data and presented to other users in a way that generates more traffic and engagement" (Gerlitz–Helmond 2013: 1349; cf. Veszelszki 2018).

Social media has transformed not only the notion of community, but also the notion of audience. The (micro)celebrities that many people follow on social media also act as opinion leaders – which can be financially rewarding: influencer marketing has become a separate branch of marketing. This activity involves seeking out online opinion leaders to subtly or more overtly promote a product or service in exchange for financial support or product (samples). Influencers are able to develop a special relationship with their audience that brands cannot achieve through traditional advertising. Influencers are do-it-yourself social media users who create their own digital personas, content and build their own audiences (Ruiz-Gomez 2019: 15). They are valuable to a company or brand if they are able to raise awareness of themselves – and the products they promote.

Rojek's (2001) threefold model of celebrity distinguishes three sources of celebrity: 1. ascribed: the fame a person inherits from famous parents or relatives, such as members of royal families or children of famous parents; 2. achieved: celebrity acquired through achievement or talent, for example in the case of athletes, politicians or scientists; 3. attributed: public persona created by industry players to satisfy

certain needs. Influencers can fall into any of these three categories: they may be building on the fame of another famous person (e.g. starting a media career as the wife of a well-known man); or, after a career as an athlete, they may be consulting and offering products on fitness or lifestyle topics; or they may be cashing in on their fame as a reality TV star through social media (cf. Szadai ed. 2022).

Influencers tend to have a high follower/followed ratio, meaning that many people (unknown to them) are connected to their page as followers, while they follow a relatively small number of users. In terms of reach, the number of followers (depending on the platform) distinguishes nano and micro influencers, who reach a smaller audience, from macro and mega influencers, who reach global masses (Pellicer 2017; Ruiz-Gomez 2019: 16). Micro influencers, unlike mainstream entertainment celebrities, will be famous to a narrower, so-called niche group (Marwick 2013: 114), but for them they can develop a more credible persona compared to the large and unreachable stars (Abidin 2016). In addition to targeting a specific audience, there is also a specific behaviour associated with micro influencer status: these individuals are present in the idealised environment of transparency on social media sites, creating content with this in mind, while defining themselves as influencers and celebrities regardless of the attention they actually receive (Marwick 2013: 114). Smaller influencers, who are able to build loyalty, play a strategic role in attracting younger consumers (Jacobs 2021).

Intimacy and authenticity – or at least the illusion of it – is one of the secrets of social media success (Simon 2019). Influencers communicate with their followers as if they were friends: sharing personal moments, giving insights into their lives ('behind the scenes') – or giving fans that feeling. According to Alice Marwick (2015a, 2015b), so-called strategic intimacy allows influencers to reach their audience more easily and gain even more popularity. The recent emergence of the parasympathetic relationship (Horton–Wohl 1956) is also exemplified by the influencer–follower relationship: the illusion that the follower has a real relationship with the media personality they admire (but this acquaintance is not reciprocal) is even more powerful in social media, as influencers encourage quasi-interaction with their followers. Influencers determine the cultural patterns that everyday users follow (Drenten et al. 2020), for example by integrating product placements into posts or even by standardising patterns of (female) body presentation (cf. Veszelszki–Aczél 2023). Abidin (2016: 1) speaks of so-called selfie-based marketing: this means that for influencers, their body (taking a photo) is one of the products they can use to sell products and services on social media.

The influencer phenomenon has become a billion dollar business worldwide (Drenten et al. 2020: 42). Not only do young people often believe in influencers more than official brand representatives, but sometimes they themselves are considering a career as an influencer: in the Carpathian Basin Youth Survey 2020, 8 percent of 15–29-year-olds surveyed said they are likely to earn money as influencers or youtubers in a few years (Székely–Veszelszki 2021). A new development in the world of opinion leaders is the emergence of CGI and AI influencers (cf. Guld 2023).

Another specific dynamic of change in online communities is the (generational?) turnover of users of each platform. Facebook, despite being a site specifically for university students when it was founded in 2004, is ageing: its middle-aged and elderly

users are increasing. This is why young people, especially the millennials born after 2000, currently in their teens and twenties, are seeking new forms of communication unknown or less used by their parents, grandparents and teachers. This is illustrated, among other things, by Facebook's run after TikTok: the (still) largest social networking site has been constantly imitating new developments, first Snapchat, which appeals to young people with ephemeral content sharing, and now TikTok, which is designed for fast-paced video content.

4. Changing information: The rise of the fake

The activity of media platforms is significantly influenced by the fact that their audiences consume news along with social media coverage and its commentary stream; the fact that the news race (to be the first to publish the latest information) has accelerated with the loss of the role and function of the print press and the rise of citizen journalism, thus reducing the time available for monitoring (Posetti 2009) – and, above all, that both professional content producers and content consumers are confronted with new methods of information manipulation.

Wardle and Derakhshan's (2017) triad of concepts classifies misinformation into three categories: 1. *disinformation* is intentionally misleading information that appears as modified or explicitly manipulative content; 2. *misinformation* does not contain the intent to mislead, but is still false (the creator or disseminator is unaware of the falsity of the content; cf. Farkas–Schou 2018: 299); 3. *malinformation* is based on factual data but may present it in an inappropriate context or order (thus manipulating and harming a person, organisation or even the state). According to a British study (Chadwick et al. 2018), more people shared content on social media that they thought was true but later found to be false (misinformation) than intentionally spread disinformation.

But the phenomenon of fake news is "not new at all. It is not a phenomenon specific to Donald J. Trump's 2016 election campaign, nor is it exclusive to tabloid media and tabloid journalism, or even to the civil online media community" (Aczél 2017: 9). What is new, however, is the way and the platform for the spread of fake news: social media (the widespread availability of generative artificial intelligence as a tool for the production of potentially misleading content has brought radical changes in the quantity, quality and speed of fake news creation over the last three years).

Two thirds of the nearly three billion regular social media users get their latest information from social media platforms: they consume public and tabloid news along with social media coverage and its commentary stream. The ever-changing algorithms of social media – and through them the owners and editors of these sites – are able to exert a very strong control over the attention, information habits and content consumption of a large part of humanity. In parallel with the widespread use of social networking sites, pseudo-news and pseudo-scientific content has also found a new way of spreading: through social collaboration, user-generated content and user-sharing, it can easily spread on these sites at almost the speed of light.

The concept of prosumerism, associated with Toffler (1980), originally referred to consumers producing the goods or services they use themselves (making their own

clothes, cars, vegetables, etc.) The term has taken on a new meaning in the online world, as the traditional author–reader relationship associated with the Gutenberg Galaxy has changed, becoming more direct and dialogic: in social media, the reader can become the author. These online services are community-based, with the participating online community creating and consuming the content. By contaminating the English words producer and consumer, the creator–consumer is called *prosumer* (cf. Veszelszki 2017e). The fact that social media content is simultaneously produced by consumers is what we call the *deprofessionalisation of the content production process.* This implies that users who are not or less skilled in the theory and practice of content creation are able to publish texts, images and videos in an uncontrolled way, without so-called gatekeeper decisions, and to reach a wider audience (if they go viral).

Social networking sites have therefore significantly changed not only interpersonal communication, but also organisational and news communication. In a world of so-called "recommendation culture", the competitive advantage of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok over other traditional content providers is personalised content. Social media's content filtering algorithms determine what information is presented to consumers. The algorithm behind content ranking is continuously optimised according to the platform's goals, but in a non-transparent way for users. Because of the content ranking, it is possible that users encounter content from those with similar interests and interacting frequently with each other the most. The filter bubble, which is formed by the personalisation of information on social media, acts as a kind of digital belief chamber: social media sites are interested in getting users to spend as much time as possible on their platforms (including time spent viewing advertisements), so the algorithm filters and presents content that matches their previous searches and preferences (Pariser 2011).

According to the filter bubble hypothesis, if a user only encounters content that confirms their own views, they may assume that everyone else thinks in a similar way to them. It is important to note, however, that the filter bubble phenomenon is questioned by some empirical studies (e.g. Zuiderveen Borgesius et al. 2016); however, it is certainly possible to argue that the algorithms behind online interfaces influence the information that a browsing person encounters online. Even if we do not accept the existence of the filter bubble phenomenon, the so-called repetition effect is at work: if the user encounters the same information several times, even from the same source, in a redundant way, it will be more convincing for him or her through repetition (Gelfert 2018: 112). This is further confirmed by the fact that people with similar interests and beliefs are likely to belong to a circle of acquaintances.

The way social networking sites display news and changes in users' reading habits also contribute to the spread of fake news (Gross 2017). Many users do not even open the link (which could point to a phishing or click-bait site), but share the content without thinking, spreading misinformation or fraudulent sites. Clickbait texts, attention-grabbing titles can persuade readers to visit the page. A clickbait title appeals to the emotions, arousing the reader's curiosity by withholding and exaggerating information (Rayson 2017; Veszelszki 2017a, d). It should be added, however, that clickbait headlines are not only used by pseudo-news creators, but also increasingly by online media outlets.

A new era in the age of fake news and (audiovisual) manipulation has begun with the emergence of deepfake in 2017. Deepfake refers to digital media manipulation: an ultra-realistic, machine-learned fake audio or video recording or video, where the actors can do or say things that they most likely would not (Dobber et al. 2020: 1; Veszelszki 2021: 97, 2023: 15). Using real visual and auditory material, artificial intelligence (the neural network) can create video sequences that can be used to deceive people. Deepfake differs from photoshopped images in that it affects not only the eyes but also the ears (Veszelszki 2023: 15). The unsuspecting and untrained video viewer is easily fooled by deepfake videos of ever higher and higher quality. In the early stages of deepfake, these videos were based on real sequences of images, but with the wider adoption of generative AI, it is now possible to present fully artificially created videos as real.

Deepfake raises a wide range of legal and moral issues: we need to be prepared for new kinds of fraudulent and deceptive activities, whether human- or robot-controlled. Deepfake is interpreted by Aczél (2023: 38) as plagiarism of the person. Already deceased politicians send video messages of support for current candidates in India, a well-known rapper expresses support for a candidate in South Africa, a U.S. president urges voters to stay away from the election – of course, none of the three cases is based on real video or audio recordings (Elliott 2024). Deepfake already plays a role in political and economic communication, producing private and public revenge videos (cf. revenge pornography), in various criminal activities (AIC, AI crime; e.g. phishing, spoofing, grandma scam, financial fraud; cf. Keleti 2023: 70), and may raise a number of cybersecurity concerns (Krasznay 2023, cf. on its legal aspects: Lendvai 2023; Eszteri 2023; Miklós 2023; Gosztonyi–Lendvai 2023, 2024). Deepfake may further reduce trust in the media, since audio and video recordings will be less and less considered evidence (and therefore it may happen that real information is labelled as untrue). In addition, the "doubt in doubt" paradox poses new challenges: it leads to socio-public instability when users become so critical, even cynical, of the stimuli they receive that they even question legitimate information from legitimate sources (Veszelszki 2023). The "deepfake is the artificial intelligence solution that is easy to access and use in operations, but very difficult to defend against" (Krasznay 2023: 107).

In addition to image, sound and video generators, another new development in the "fake" relationship system is text-generating artificial intelligence and the underlying LLM (large language models) development. In November 2022, the application ChatGPT was made publicly available by its developer OpenAI, and within three months its number of users exceeded 100 million. The study, which reviews the development of ChatGPT and LLMs, says: "There is a significant risk if people trust these models too much. Because they tend to give sophisticated and natural-looking responses, people may be inclined to accept these responses without critical thinking. This can be particularly risky if the models provide incorrect, inaccurate or misleading information" (Héja 2024). AI hallucinations are those AI-generated, factual but incorrect or misleading results that are caused by inaccuracies, inappropriate information, perhaps biases, or even incorrect inferences in the data set used to train the model (cf. Illia et al. 2023; Jackson–Latham 2022; Lin et al. 2021; Keleti 2023).

The content generated by the models can also be used for "malicious purposes". Because models like ChatGPT can generate human-like text, they can be used to create fake news, impersonate people in digital communications, or even produce harmful content that incites violence or promotes extremist ideologies. Without appropriate safeguards or a way to distinguish between machine-generated and human-written content, the impact of these language models on trust and truth […] is deeply worrying" (Héja 2024).

Tech companies interested in developing AI are hunting for good quality data (scientific articles, Wikipedia entries) to train their AI models, and some predictions suggest that within two years they will run out of "good" data to use for model training. So, either they will buy books from publishers, or they will collect additional data in a copyright grey area (e.g. using transcribed versions of YouTube videos), or the AI itself will generate data that can be used for its own training. Gartner predicts that by 2026, 75% of enterprises will use generative AI to create synthetic customer data (Chandrasekaran 2024).

In the face of fake and synthetic content, social media sites are attempting to detect, tag (and in the case of malicious intent, block) deceptive content using software-based AI, but new and emerging manipulative technologies are always ahead of the programs that expose them.

Human–machine communication (HMC, cf. Guzman et al. 2023) has been of interest to researchers in communication and media science for decades, but its importance will be even more appreciated in the coming decades (cf. Fehér et al. 2024).

5. Changing representations: The rise of the artificial

In 1999, fifteen futurologists and technologists were invited to a hotel in Santa Monica, USA. The meeting's brainchild and organiser, Steven Spielberg, asked them to spend three days together, reflecting on what life and technology would be like in 2054. The result of their joint work was a document of nearly 100 pages, referred to as the "2054 Bible". This technical paper became the scientific basis for the science fiction film Minority Report, which was released in 2002. The spectacular opus went down in popular culture history as a genuine box-office hit, grossing some 250 million dollars. And five years before the first iPhone and 25 years before this article was published, it predicted many of the technological innovations that are now part of our everyday lives. Touch screens, facial recognition systems, personalised semantic media and self-driving cars. All those gadgets, as Spielberg called them at the time, that are driven by a kind of autonomy and self-reliance.

Two decades later, artificial intelligence, a media technology based on deep learning algorithms, has become commonplace in almost no time. For although self-advancing programming had appeared in computer science long before, in the 1950s, and was still working with great efficiency in personalising media messages, in interpretive (semantic) and habitual (habitual) programming, it was with OpenAI 2022 that free, open AI really spread over the affluent and Internet-penetrated half of

humanity. Experiencing and using a new species, a new companion, new influences were discussed by experts and lay people alike. With all this came a series of debates on threats and achievements, ethical and functional aspects, economic and community interests. From resolutions to bans to news reports on the daily achievements, the global information space was filled with AI issues. While some of the news stories have been written and reported by the latest technology itself. A new milestone in communication culture had been reached: out of big data, a disembodied digital entity with extraordinary potential seemed to emerge, with the appearance of thinking.

AI is the name given to a new breed of digital tools that are based on neuro-linguistic programming and deep learning models or are "trained" on large learning models. These include programs and apps such as DALL-E or ChatGPT, or new search engines from Microsoft or Google. They are also referred to as triple A systems, expressing their key characteristics: algorithmicality, autonomy and automation. This triple A has simultaneously endowed new media production processes with multiple capacities and agency, creating a multiplicity of content in the media production arena. With the emergence of alternative manifestations of past and present personalities (e.g. Nixon's speech, Zelensky's surrender, Salvador Dalí's museum salute, simulations of actors, revivals and reworkings of bygone eras) or brand-new personalities, virtual influencers (e.g. Lil Miquela, Barbie or Guggimon, or even the Hungarian Aisa), the media space is now populated by a renewed, partially simulated population. At the same time, artificial intelligence, and in particular its free applications, has made it possible to satisfy the specific needs of individual imagination and intentions, such as the proliferation of revenge porn videos or the creation of avatars.

AI can, of course, not only replace the person, but also the place, the event, the reality. It can easily replace monotonous or even very broad information work based on a lot of data (e.g. dubbing, subtitling, translation). It is cost-effective and can also lead to large savings in human resources. It is capable of blurring the distinction between media productions with larger and smaller budgets. It reduces the limits to the representation of the imagination, increases freedom of expression, and puts visual and verbal representation and storytelling on a new footing by eliminating references to reality. In doing so, it marks the frontier of a new age in both media processes and media content (Boden 2016; Powell–Kleiner 2023).

In Bernard Stiegler's (2015) approach, AI is in fact a 'pharmakon'. It is an agent that can be both curative and toxic. Already in its current state, AI facilitates everyday information work, media production and organisation, and is exceptionally effective in both the creative and control sectors of the media. At the same time, it can also make human work and contribution to these same activities increasingly unnecessary, suppressing human creativity or, with the possibility of leaving out the mistakes, replacing it.

However, instead of anchoring our claims in one of the media optimist – media pessimist dichotomies, it is worthwhile to get to know the media nature of AI better. To do so, Alberto Romele (2024) offers a unique approach. First, he argues that today's digital technologies, based primarily on artificial intelligence (AI), increasingly offer personalised services, but that these machines are in fact indifferent. They do not know or understand the person, they only identify, track and reshape their habits. Secondly,

our thinking about AI, our belief in the efficiency or even omnipotence of the technology is based on our previous cultural patterns of evaluating the media. Thirdly, according to Romele, who also refers to Marshall McLuhan and Friedrich Kittler in this respect, the media in general have a habit-forming power. As habits are not only individually but also culturally determined, by providing new options to existing practices, (new) media can be seen as habituating and domesticating tools. "Accepting" a program to correct our photo for optimality, "trusting" the autonomous machine inferences and decisions that can be drawn from the data, "liking" that our daily "conversation", our need for advice or support is expressed in partnership with a learning program, is not simply an action, but a practice, which can become a practice and then a habit in the light of cultural perceptions of technology (see the smartphone at an increasingly young age, the presence and "communication" of unplugged devices – e.g. in social spaces, or "asking" ChatGPT about something).

So when we look at the latest media consumption data, we are actually seeing social habits, new or reinforced. And where we see an increase or decrease in the time series, we see a transformation of these social practices. Once again, it is change that becomes the focus of our attention, change that becomes both more hidden and more obvious as artificial intelligence becomes more widespread and pervasive.

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