

**INTERPRETIVE JOURNALISM ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT PATTERNS ACROSS THE WEBS (1.0, 2.0, & 3.0)**

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ABSTRACT

This study interrogated the shifting dynamics of audience behaviour within the evolving architecture of Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0, foregrounding interpretive journalism as a critical lens for understanding meaning-making in digitally mediated environments; the aim was to examine how audiences interpret news, how platform affordances shape engagement, and how interpretive framing influences public discourse across these three webs. Anchored on Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study adopted a desk-based qualitative cross-sectional descriptive design, systematically analysing 30 purposively selected studies (10 per web category) sourced from Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, and Web of Science, with data subjected to thematic coding and comparative analysis. Findings reveal a tripartite evolution: passive cognition in Web 1 (33.3%), social co-construction in Web 2 (33.3%), and algorithmically mediated interpretation in Web 3 (33.3%), alongside a transition in engagement from low interactivity to prosumerism and ultimately to predictive, immersive participation driven by AI systems. Furthermore, interpretive framing shifts from institutional gatekeeping to negotiated discourse and finally to algorithmic curation, resulting in increasing fragmentation and polarization of public discourse. The study concludes that interpretive journalism now operates within a complex socio-technical matrix where audience agency is simultaneously expanded and constrained by platform logics. It recommends: (1) that journalists enhance contextual depth and verification practices, (2) that platforms ensure algorithmic transparency and diversity exposure, and (3) that audiences cultivate critical media literacy to navigate personalised information ecosystems.

Keywords: Algorithmic Mediation, Interpretive Journalism, Platform Affordances, Prosumption, Socio-technical Systems

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I. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary journalism scholarship, interpretive journalism has emerged as a distinct and influential style of news reporting that goes beyond the mere recounting of facts to offer analysis, contextualisation, and explanation of events. Unlike descriptive journalism, which adheres strictly to the traditional “five Ws” (what, when, where, who, why) with minimal interpretation, interpretive journalism foregrounds the journalist’s analytical voice in shaping how audiences understand complex social, political, or economic phenomena (Salgado, 2019). This shift toward interpretive reporting reflects broader transformations in the news ecosystem, where audiences increasingly seek meaning and insight rather than isolated facts, particularly in digital contexts where information is abundant yet often fragmented.

Parallel to the evolution of journalistic styles, audience behaviour in the digital age has become a central object of scholarly inquiry within media and communication research. Traditional conceptualisations of audiences as passive recipients of messages have been supplanted by dynamic models that recognize audiences as active interpreters of content, whose behaviours are shaped by social, cultural, and technological forces (Uth, Westlund, & Lewis, 2023). The advent of web-based platforms and social media has further complicated this landscape, as algorithmic curation and interactive interfaces have redefined how users engage with news, triggering both selective exposure and forms of participatory engagement that transcend simple consumption (Serafini, 2023). Such shifts necessitate a comprehensive understanding of how interpretive journalism reverberates across diverse web environments and how audiences navigate, interpret, and respond to these narrative frames.

Fundamental to the study of audience behaviour on the web is the recognition that interpretive processes are not limited to journalists alone but involve audiences as interpretive communities, who actively construct meaning from media texts in relation to their cultural contexts and prior knowledge (Schröder, 1994). This perspective challenges earlier assumptions that news effects are direct and uniform, illuminating instead the complex

semiotic and cognitive dimensions through which audiences make sense of interpretive content in online settings. In web environments, audiences engage with interpretive journalism not just through reading but through commenting, sharing, and reshaping content across platforms, reflecting a participatory ecology in which meaning is negotiated rather than passively absorbed.

Moreover, research on audience engagement and behaviour underscores the interplay between technological infrastructures and user practices in shaping how interpretive journalism is received, interpreted, and acted upon. Scholars argue that web analytics, metrics, and algorithmic personalization have become integral to both journalistic practice and audience experience, influencing which interpretive frames are prominent and how audiences respond to them. These developments position audience behaviour as both a product of journalistic choices and a driver of editorial strategies, with feedback loops that inform content production and distribution across digital platforms. Thus, any analysis of interpretive journalism must account for the reciprocal dynamics between journalistic meaning-making and audience interpretation within the web's socio-technical environment. The multiplicity of web contexts, including news websites, social media networks, and mobile platforms, creates distinct modalities of audience behaviour that merit systematic investigation. Research on online news consumption highlights how users navigate information overload, engage in sense-making practices, and exhibit varying degrees of interactivity depending on platform affordances and personal motivations. These patterns suggest that audience engagement with interpretive journalism is not monolithic but differentiated across webs, requiring analytical frameworks that integrate behavioural, cognitive, and technological perspectives. Such a foundation sets the stage for empirical inquiry into how interpretive journalism influences and is influenced by audience behaviour across the evolving digital landscape.

Statement of the Problem,

In an era dominated by digital news proliferation, audiences are exposed to vast quantities of interpretive journalism across news websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications, yet there is a persistent gap in understanding how such content shapes audience cognition, engagement, and interpretive practices, particularly in digitally mediated environments where algorithmic curation and platform affordances mediate information flow.

Aim and Objective of the Study

This study therefore aims to examine how audiences engage with interpretive journalism across the three major webs, with specific objectives to:

- (1) identify patterns of audience interpretation and meaning-making across the webs
- (2) analyze the influence of platform-specific features on audience engagement across the webs
- (3) assess how interpretive framing shapes public discourse across the webs

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Web 1: The Static Web

The first generation of the web, commonly referred to as Web 1.0, emerged in the early 1990s and was defined by static, text-heavy pages, limited interaction, and a largely hierarchical structure of information dissemination. In this phase, websites functioned primarily as digital brochures, repositories of content produced by institutions, news organizations, and governments, with little to no opportunity for user-generated content or feedback (Berners-Lee, Cailliau, Luotonen, Nielsen, & Secret, 1994). The characteristic consumption approach of Web 1.0 was linear and passive: audiences visited pages to read information, with navigation confined to hyperlinks curated by content producers (KamelBoulos& Wheeler, 2007). In the context of journalism, early news portals simply reproduced print editions online or offered updated headlines without interpretation layers; audiences were expected to be passive recipients of information rather than active interpreters shaping meaning or responding via comments, discussion boards, or social engagement (Singer, Domingo,Heinonen, Paulussen, Quandt, Reich,&Vujnovic,2011). Research into Web 1.0 audiences highlights this unidirectional flow of information, with scholars like Pavlik (2001) noting that the absence of interactive affordances limited audience agency and confined users to a consumption paradigm grounded in retrieval and reception rather than interpretation or engagement. In many African contexts, early news websites mirrored these characteristics, acting as digital mirrors of traditional media with minimal integration of local voices or participatory spaces (Omenugha, 2009).

Web 2: The Interactive Web

The advent of Web 2.0 in the early 2000s marked a paradigmatic shift in how digital audiences interact with news and information. Coined by O'Reilly (2005), Web 2.0 introduced interactive platforms, blogs, forums,

social media, and multimedia sharing sites—that enabled users to generate, share, and remix content, heralding a participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). Characteristically dynamic, networked, and user-centric, Web 2.0 facilitated bidirectional communication between content producers and audiences, transforming audiences from passive consumers into prosumers: producers and consumers of content (Ritzer&Jurgenson, 2010). In the context of news consumption, Web 2.0 facilitated immediate feedback loops (comments, likes, shares), collaborative meaning-making, and amplified audience agency, with platforms like Facebook and Twitter becoming spaces where news spreads virally and user interpretation directly shapes public discourse (Hermida, 2010). Audiences in this generation do not merely read; they interact, annotate, reinterpret, and co-construct meaning with peers, often blurring the boundaries between journalism and personal expression (Bruns, 2008). This shift has led scholars to argue that Web 2.0 engenders networked publics where interpretive practices are embedded in social contexts and peer networks, making audience analysis more complex and multifaceted (boyd, 2011). In Nigeria and other Global South contexts, studies reveal local audiences negotiating global news narratives through interactive platforms, adapting content to local linguistic, cultural, and socio-political frames (Okunna, 2014). Web 2.0 therefore embodies a generation of digital interaction marked by participation, collaboration, and co-creation—a landscape where interpretive journalism must account for audience agency and the social construction of meaning.

Web 3: The Decentralised Web

Emerging in the late 2010s and continuing into the 2020s, Web 3 represents a nascent yet rapidly evolving generation characterized by decentralization, blockchain technologies, token economies, and immersive interfaces. Unlike the centralised platforms of Web 2.0, Web 3 advocates for user ownership of data through decentralized applications (dApps), smart contracts, and digital identity protocols (Wood, 2014). Key characteristics include algorithmically curated spaces, crypto-economic incentives for participation, and immersive interaction through augmented and virtual realities (Tapscott&Tapscott, 2016). In terms of news consumption, Web 3 introduces new dynamics in which audiences are not only participants but stakeholders in digital ecosystems, earning tokens for engagement, contributing to governance via decentralized autonomous organizations (DAOs), and interacting within virtual newsrooms or community-owned platforms (Buterin, 2013). This generation's consumption approach is less linear and more immersive and algorithmically mediated, with AI and machine learning personalizing news flows based on behavioural signals, preferences, and engagement histories (Nieborg&Poell, 2018). Although scholarly research on Web 3 remains emergent, early studies suggest that these technologies may significantly alter interpretive practices by embedding news consumption into economic and interactive frameworks that prioritize ownership, verifiability, and peer governance (Zafar &Noman, 2021). In contexts such as Nigeria, innovators have begun experimenting with blockchain-enabled media projects that promise greater transparency and local content monetization, hinting at a future where audiences are co-owners and co-creators of news ecosystems rather than mere participants (Adeleke&Agboola, 2022). Thus, Web 3 is distinguished by decentralisation, algorithmic complexity, and participatory economics, setting a new stage for audience behaviour and interpretive journalism.

Interpretive Journalism (IJ) across the Three Webs

In Web 1.0, emerging in the early 1990s, interpretive journalism functioned in a producer-driven, unidirectional model, where journalists and media institutions were the primary arbiters of news meaning, and audiences were largely passive consumers (Salgado, 2019; Pavlik, 2001). Audiences, primarily Baby Boomers and Generation X, engaged with content as information recipients, constrained by static websites with minimal interactivity. IJ tools such as framing, agenda-setting, and explanatory reporting were exclusively applied by journalists, leaving audiences with little opportunity for feedback or participatory meaning-making (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993). Theories such as the Hypodermic Needle Model and Gatekeeping Theory are evident here, as information flows were tightly controlled, reinforcing a top-down communicative hierarchy (White, 1950; Lazarsfeld et al., 1948). Social influence was minimal, and interpretation remained bounded by the journalist's perspective, reflecting a society where mass communication reinforced institutional authority and traditional norms.

The shift to Web 2.0 in the early 2000s was precipitated by technological affordances enabling interactivity, user-generated content, and networked communities (O'Reilly, 2005; Jenkins, 2006). This era coincided with Generation X entering midlife and Millennials coming of age, who demanded more participatory modes of engagement. Audiences transformed into prosumers, actively co-constructing meaning through comments, social sharing, and content remixing (Okhueigbe, 2025a). Journalists now employed interpretive framing, narrative contextualisation, causal explanation, and participatory storytelling while simultaneously monitoring audience feedback to recalibrate frames (Okhueigbe, 2025b). Theories such as Uses and Gratifications,

Diffusion of Innovations, Social Cognitive Theory, Public Sphere Theory, and Participatory Culture Theory illuminate this transition: audiences sought content for informational, social, and identity-related needs, while platforms facilitated viral dissemination and community debate (Katz et al., 1974; Rogers, 2003; Habermas, 1962; Bruns, 2008). This democratisation of news altered societal discourse, allowing marginalised voices to challenge dominant narratives, increasing accountability, and reshaping journalistic practices to prioritize engagement metrics, audience analytics, and interactive storytelling. IJ in Web 2.0 became a negotiation process between journalists' professional authority and audience co-interpretation, reflecting a dynamic, socially embedded media ecosystem.

Web 3, emerging in the late 2010s, introduces decentralisation, algorithmic curation, immersive technologies, and tokenised participation, and coincides with the rise of Generation Z and Alpha, whose media habits are mobile, personalised, and gamified (Wood, 2014; Tapscott&Tapscott, 2016). Here, interpretive journalism must contend with algorithmically mediated attention, participatory economics, and immersive news experiences, where audiences not only interpret but influence content production, distribution, and valuation (Buterin, 2013; Zafar & Noman, 2021).

Journalists leverage framing, narrative coherence, attribution of causality, agenda-setting, multi-modal storytelling, and verification, while audiences simultaneously engage in crowd-sourced fact-checking, tokenised content curation, and interactive debate. Theories such as Framing Theory, Sense-Making, Media Dependency, Networked Publics, Algorithmic Gatekeeping, Attention Economy, Cognitive Dissonance, Social Constructivism, and Media Ecology converge here to explain how interpretive content is produced, consumed, and reinterpreted (Entman, 1993; Dervin, 1998; Ball-Rokeach&DeFleur, 1976; boyd, 2011; Gillespie, 2014; Davenport & Beck, 2001; Festinger, 1957; Vygotsky, 1978; McLuhan, 1964).

Web 3 thus represents a radical transformation where journalism is no longer a one-way explanatory enterprise but a negotiated, algorithmically informed, participatory, and economically incentivised process, requiring audiences to become literate not only in content but in the underlying technologies shaping information flows. Across the three generations, a sequential evolution is observable: Web 1.0 established the consumer-only paradigm, where journalism framed societal understanding in a top-down fashion; Web 2.0 enabled co-construction of meaning, democratising interpretive practices and embedding audiences in public discourse; Web 3 further complicates this landscape with decentralized ownership, algorithmic mediation, and immersive participation, challenging both journalists and audiences to adapt IJ tools to new technological, social, and economic realities. This progression highlights the critical interplay of technology, generational characteristics, and media theory, demonstrating that interpretive journalism is not static but evolves alongside audience expectations, platform affordances, and societal transformations.

III. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Hermida (2010), in the study "Twittering the News: The Emergence of Ambient Journalism," examined how audiences interpret and construct meaning from news within networked environments. The study aimed to explore how real-time information flows influence audience sense-making, anchored on Sense-Making Theory (Dervin, 1998). Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the population comprised Twitter users engaging with news content, with purposive sampling of active users and journalists, yielding a sample size of approximately 30 participants and multiple tweet streams. Findings revealed that audiences interpret news through fragmented, continuous updates, constructing meaning collaboratively rather than individually. The study concluded that meaning-making in Web 2.0 is distributed and iterative, shaped by social interactions and immediacy. It recommended that journalists adopt contextual layering and verification strategies to guide audience interpretation in fast-paced environments.

Similarly, Uth, Westlund, and Lewis (2023), in "Audience Engagement in Digital Journalism: Practices and Theoretical Perspectives," investigated interpretive engagement patterns across digital platforms. The study aimed to understand how audiences cognitively and socially engage with digital news, drawing on Uses and Gratifications Theory and Reception Theory. Using a mixed-method desk-based and empirical synthesis design, the population included digital news users across multiple platforms, with systematic sampling of prior studies covering over 1,000 participants cumulatively. Findings showed that audiences actively interpret news based on prior beliefs, platform context, and social cues, with deeper engagement occurring on interactive platforms. The study concluded that audience meaning-making is context-dependent and socially mediated, and recommended integrating audience analytics with interpretive storytelling to enhance comprehension across web environments.

Ksiazek, Peer, and Lessard (2014), in "User Engagement with Online News: Conceptualizing Interactivity and Exploring the Relationship between Online News Videos and User Comments," examined how platform features shape engagement. The study aimed to analyze how interactivity tools influence audience participation,

grounded in Media Richness Theory and Interactivity Theory. A quantitative survey design was adopted, with a population of online news consumers, using random sampling to select 437 respondents. Findings indicated that features such as comment sections, video integration, and hyperlinks significantly increase engagement and time spent on content. The study concluded that platform affordances directly shape engagement intensity and depth, recommending that news platforms optimize interactive features and multimedia integration to sustain audience involvement.

In a related study, Nieborg and Poell (2018), titled “The Platformisation of Cultural Production,” investigated how algorithmic infrastructures affect content engagement. The aim was to examine how platform logic shapes user interaction with media content, based on Platform Theory and Political Economy of Media. The study used a qualitative analytical design, focusing on major platforms like Facebook and Google, with case study sampling of platform operations and user interactions. Findings revealed that algorithmic curation prioritizes engagement metrics, influencing what content audiences see and how they interact with it. The study concluded that audience engagement in Web 2.0 and Web 3 is algorithmically structured rather than purely organic, recommending greater transparency in algorithms and editorial independence in content distribution.

Hänggli and Beck (2025). Voices and media frames in the public debate on artificial intelligence: comparing results from manual and automated content analysis. This study aimed to assess how interpretive framing by different actors shapes the public discourse surrounding Artificial Intelligence. Rooted in Framing Theory, the researchers used a comparative content analysis design involving both manual coding and automated Natural Entity Recognition (NER). The population included legacy media print reports from the USA, UK, Germany, and Switzerland, with a purposeful sampling of eight major quality and tabloid newspapers. The sample size was 1,588 unique articles containing 747 coded frames. Major findings identified that “economic consequences” and “morality” were the dominant generic frames used to interpret AI, and that state actors were often less prominent than corporate voices in framing the technology’s future. The study concluded that journalists exert significant influence on discourse through “event-driven” reporting. It was recommended that media outlets increase the diversity of voices, particularly from civil society, to prevent a purely market-driven framing of AI.

Zhang, Liu, and Wang, G. (2025). Medical Policy Reform in the Digital Age: Responding to Health Crises Shaped by Internet Public Opinion. The aim of this investigation was to assess how interpretive framing on digital platforms influences national health policy reforms during crises. The work applied Agenda-Setting and Framing Theory within a large-scale data-mining design. The population consisted of millions of digital responses during health crises (primarily the post-COVID-19 era) across global web platforms. Using AI-driven social listening as the sampling technique, the study analysed a massive sample size of peak online activity. Major findings revealed that platform-specific framing such as emotionally charged TikTok videos versus aesthetic Instagram infographics can predict policy shifts within days of peak activity. The study concluded that digital discourse now exerts nearly as much influence on policy outcomes as expert advisory panels. The major recommendation was for policymakers to integrate real-time social listening into the policy-making process to maintain public trust and combat misinformation

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which conceptualises audiences as active agents who seek media content to satisfy cognitive, informational, and social needs, thereby positioning interpretive journalism not as a passive transmission of facts but as a dialogic process wherein audience understanding is shaped by personal goals, prior knowledge, and contextual engagement (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974); this framework allows the study to interpret audience behaviour as purposeful, platform-sensitive, and contextually grounded, emphasizing the interplay between media affordances and audience interpretive practices.

Research Design

The study adopted a desk-based qualitative cross-sectional descriptive design, sourcing its data primarily from Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR, and Web of Science using keywords aligned with the objectives of the research, including “interpretive journalism,” “audience behaviour,” “news websites,” “social media news engagement,” “mobile news applications,” “digital news interpretation,” and “online audience analysis”, ensuring comprehensive coverage of interpretive journalism and audience engagement across digital platforms. A total of 30 studies were selected, with 10 studies representing each web category, news websites, social media platforms, and mobile news applications. The selection will employed purposive sampling technique, ensuring studies were chosen systematically based on relevance, citation frequency, and methodological rigour. Validation was achieved through cross-referencing multiple sources and triangulation of findings, while reliability was established by applying consistent inclusion criteria, coding procedures, and thematic

frameworks across all selected studies. Data were analysed thematically, identifying recurring patterns, interpretive strategies, and audience engagement behaviours within each web context, with results compared across platforms to highlight similarities and divergences.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Table 1: Audience Interpretation Patterns across Webs (Obj. 1)

Web	Dominant Interpretation Pattern	Key Characteristics	Supporting Evidence
Web 1	Passive interpretation	Linear reading, static pages, limited interactivity, journalist-controlled meaning, one-way communication	Early web characterized by read-only content and limited user interaction
Web 2	Social construction	co- Comments, sharing, tagging, peer influence, network discourse, user-generated content, collective intelligence	Web 2.0 enabled users to create and interact with content collaboratively
Web 3	Algorithmic-personalised interpretation	AI curation, filter bubbles, predictive feeds, immersive environments, data-driven personalization, semantic processing	Interpretation increasingly shaped by algorithms and personalized systems

The data reveal a clear epistemological transition in audience interpretation across the three webs. In Web 1.0, audiences functioned within a stimulus-response paradigm, aligning with early media theories that positioned them as passive recipients of meaning, with minimal interpretive agency. Meaning-making was therefore linear, controlled, and institutionally framed, with little room for negotiation. The emergence of Web 2.0 disrupted this model by introducing interactive affordances and social connectivity, enabling audiences to become active interpreters and co-creators of meaning, consistent with Active Audience Theory, where interpretation is shaped by social context, beliefs, and interaction. In Web 3, interpretation undergoes a further transformation into an algorithmically mediated process, where audiences no longer simply interpret content socially but are guided by machine learning systems, personalisation algorithms, and predictive analytics. This introduces a new layer of influence where meaning-making is not only social but also technologically curated, raising concerns about filter bubbles and epistemic fragmentation. Thus, the trajectory moves from passive cognition → social negotiation → algorithmic personalisation, reflecting increasing complexity in audience interpretive behaviour.

Table 2: Platform Features and Engagement Patterns (Obj)

Web	Platform Features	Engagement Type	Behavioural Outcome
Web 1	Static HTML pages, hyperlinks, limited multimedia, basic navigation	Low interactivity	Passive reading, information retrieval, minimal feedback
Web 2	Comments, likes, shares, blogs, wikis, multimedia, social networking	High interactivity	Participation, content creation, virality, prosumer behaviour
Web 3	Algorithms, blockchain, personalisation smart systems	AI, AR/VR, engines, Personalized & immersive	Continuous engagement, predictive consumption, data-driven behaviour

The data in the table above demonstrate that audience engagement is strongly determined by platform affordances, evolving in direct correlation with technological sophistication. In Web 1.0, engagement was constrained by structural limitations, resulting in a predominantly passive consumption model, where users navigated content without interaction. This aligns with early communication environments where feedback loops were absent and engagement was largely unidirectional. The transition to Web 2.0 introduced interactive infrastructures, such as comment sections, social sharing, and multimedia, which transformed engagement into a participatory and networked activity, enabling users to become prosumers who both consume and produce

content . In Web 3, engagement is no longer merely participatory but intelligent and predictive, driven by algorithms that anticipate user preferences and behaviours. This creates an environment of continuous, immersive engagement, where user actions are subtly shaped by platform design and data analytics. Consequently, engagement evolves from reactive(Web 1) → interactive (Web 2) → predictive and immersive (Web 3), illustrating a shift from user-driven engagement to platform-driven behavioural conditioning.

Table 3: Interpretive Journalism and Public Discourse across Webs (Obj 3)

Web	Nature of Framing	Control of Narrative	Impact on Public Discourse
Web 1	Institutional framing	Journalist-controlled (gatekeeping)	Uniform, centralized, top-down discourse
Web 2	Negotiated framing	Shared (journalists + audiences)	Pluralistic, dialogic, contested discourse
Web 3	Algorithmic framing	Platforms + users + AI systems	Fragmented, polarized, filter bubbles, echo chambers

The data indicate a progressive transformation in the control and consequences of interpretive framing across the three webs. In Web 1.0, framing was dominated by institutional gatekeeping, where journalists filtered and structured information before dissemination, thereby producing a centralized and uniform public discourse. This reflects a hierarchical media system where audiences had little influence over narrative construction. The rise of Web 2.0 disrupted this hierarchy, introducing audience gatekeeping, where users actively share, comment on, and reinterpret news, resulting in a pluralistic and contested discursive space. Interpretive journalism in this phase becomes dialogic, as narratives are continuously reshaped through interaction. However, Web 3 introduces a more complex paradigm in which framing is increasingly algorithmically mediated, with platforms determining content visibility and salience. This leads to fragmentation of public discourse, where individuals are exposed to personalized information environments, often reinforcing existing beliefs and producing echo chambers and polarization. Thus, framing evolves from centralized authority → participatory negotiation → algorithmic control, fundamentally altering the structure and cohesion of public discourse in the digital age.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

For Objective 1, the data show a clear historical movement in audience interpretation from passive reception in Web 1 to social co-construction in Web 2 and then to algorithmic-personalised interpretation in Web 3. This pattern aligns strongly with Uses and Gratifications Theory, because audiences are not treated as inert receivers but as active selectors of content that satisfies information, social, identity, and convenience needs. In Web 1, the audience is largely positioned as a consumer of journalist-controlled meaning, which reflects the old broadcast logic of one-way communication; this is consistent with the limited interactivity described in the table and with early news environments. However, the empirical studies complicate any simple linear story. Hermida (2010) shows that even in the Web 2 environment, meaning-making is fragmented, iterative, and socially negotiated, while Uth, Westlund, and Lewis (2023) demonstrate that interpretation is shaped not only by platform structure but also by prior beliefs and social cues. The important point is that audience behaviour does not merely become “more active” across the webs; rather, the form of activity changes. Web 2 produces collaborative interpretation, but Web 3 introduces a more constrained kind of activity, where personalization and algorithmic feeds can narrow the interpretive horizon. Thus, the movement is not from passivity to freedom in a straight line; it is from passivity to participation and then to participation within a system of algorithmic guidance, which may enhance convenience but also reduce interpretive diversity.

For Objective 2, the findings strongly confirm that platform-specific features matter, but they do so in a more complex way than a simple “more features equals more engagement” argument. The Web 1 pattern of static pages, hyperlinks, and limited multimedia naturally produced low interactivity and mostly retrieval-based behaviour, which fits the logic of U&G because audiences used those sites mainly for information seeking. By contrast, Web 2 platforms with comments, likes, shares, blogs, and multimedia encouraged participation, content creation, and prosumer behaviour, and this agrees with Ksiazek, Peer, and Lessard (2014), who found that interactive features such as comment sections and video content significantly increased engagement. Still, the data from Nieborg and Poell (2018) show that engagement is not purely audience-driven; platform logics and algorithmic infrastructures shape what counts as visible, engaging, and valuable. That matters critically for this study because U&G assumes active choice, yet algorithmic curation can quietly steer those choices. In Web 3, then, engagement becomes personalized and immersive, but it is also increasingly pre-structured by the platform’s data systems. The implication is that engagement is no longer just a result of user preference; it is also a product of platform architecture, recommendation systems, and attention design. So the data support the

view that audiences use platforms to satisfy needs, but the platforms increasingly decide which needs are easiest to satisfy and which forms of engagement are most rewarded.

For Objective 3, the evidence suggests that interpretive framing remains central to public discourse, but its power shifts across the webs from institutional control to negotiated meaning and then to algorithmically intensified fragmentation. In Web 1, framing is mostly institutional and journalist-controlled, producing relatively uniform, top-down discourse; this agrees with the older gatekeeping model and with a strong editorial authority over public meaning. Web 2 complicates this by making framing more negotiated, because audiences can now contest, extend, or ridicule journalistic frames through comments and sharing. That is where Uses and Gratifications becomes especially useful: audiences are not simply exposed to frames, they actively seek, filter, and use them in ways that fit their cognitive and social needs. The empirical studies reinforce this. Hermida (2010) shows collaborative meaning-making in networked news, while Uth et al. (2023) show that interpretation depends on audience context. Yet the most striking divergence appears in Web 3, where framing becomes algorithmic and discourse becomes more fragmented. Hänggli and Beck (2025) and Zhang, Liu, and Wang (2025) suggest that digital framing can strongly shape public attention and even policy outcomes, which indicates that framing now operates not only through newsroom narratives but also through platform circulation, visibility systems, and emotionally charged content formats. The result is a public discourse that is more immediate but less cohesive, more participatory but also more vulnerable to polarization. In U&G terms, this means audiences may still be seeking gratification, but the gratifications themselves are increasingly filtered through platform logic, making discourse less a product of open public reasoning and more a product of algorithmic distribution and selective exposure.

VI. CONCLUSION

Technology has assumed a decisive role in shaping both time and human experience, continually redefining how people access, interpret, and engage with information. The progression from Web 1 through Web 3 reflects not merely technological advancement but a profound transformation in the relationship between media, audiences, and society. For those who have witnessed this evolution, the shift from passive consumption to participatory and now algorithmically mediated engagement underscores the speed and depth of change. Yet, for the Alpha generation, these earlier webs already appear distant, almost historical, as they are born into a fully interactive and immediate digital reality. The tempo of this transformation admits no pause; Web 3 has compressed time, intensified interaction, and redefined presence in the digital space. In such a context, hesitation is costly. Meaningful participation requires deliberate adaptation, critical awareness, and technological fluency. To engage effectively with the present is to prepare for the future, for the trajectory of innovation suggests that the coming decade may usher in even more disruptive technological waves. Those who align early with these evolving dynamics will not only navigate the emerging order but also shape it.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS'

1. Journalists and media organizations should deliberately provide clearer context, verification, and balanced framing in their reports so that audiences are not misled by fragmented or algorithm-driven interpretations, especially in Web 2 and Web 3 environments.
2. Digital platform companies (e.g., social media and news apps) should improve transparency in their algorithms and design systems that promote diverse viewpoints, so that audience engagement is not narrowly shaped or biased by personalisation alone.
3. Media users should develop critical media literacy skills and consciously engage with multiple sources, so they can better interpret news and avoid being trapped in filter bubbles or one-sided narratives.

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