

The influence of media in the digital democracy in Indonesia

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Abstract This study examines how digital media reshape democratic quality in Indonesia by transforming information flows, public opinion formation, civic participation, and government accountability within the digital public sphere. Rather than treating these dimensions separately, this research adopted the concept of democratic quality to capture the broader systemic impact of digital communication on contemporary democracy. This study combined bibliometric and qualitative approaches to provide both a macro-level mapping and an in-depth thematic interpretation. Bibliometric data were collected from the Scopus database covering the period 2020-2025, using PRISMA procedures, resulting in 56 core publications. VOSviewer was used to identify research clusters and intellectual trends, while NVivo 12 Plus supported qualitative thematic analysis. The findings indicate a dominant shift in global research from early concerns with digital participation and public engagement toward growing attention to algorithmic power, disinformation, polarisation, and platform governance. In the Indonesian context, digital media simultaneously expands democratic inclusion through increased participation and transparency, while also weakening deliberative quality due to misinformation, echo chambers, and low digital literacy. This study highlights that platform algorithms and information governance increasingly shape the trajectory of digital democracy. This research contributes to communication studies by offering an integrated framework for understanding how digital media restructure democratic quality in the evolving digital public sphere.

Keywords: democracy participation; digital media; digital public space; disinformation

INTRODUCTION

The transformation from traditional media to digital communication marks a fundamental paradigm shift in contemporary democracy. Within the perspective of media ecology and socio-technical transformation, digital media are not merely new communication tools but constitute an environment that reshapes how information is produced, circulated, and interpreted (Widholm & Ekman, 2024). This shift has altered the structure of political communication, moving from centralised gatekeeping toward decentralised and networked communication systems where citizens, platforms, and institutions interact dynamically (Widholm & Ekman, 2024). Consequently, democracy in the digital age must be understood within a transformed communication ecosystem that continuously mediates political reality (Wiestner & Spiller, 2025).

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This transformation has given rise to a new form of public sphere. While Habermas conceptualised the public sphere as a deliberative space rooted in rational-critical debate, the emergence of networked digital platforms has reconfigured this space into what Benkler describes as a networked public sphere (Duvenage, 2018). In this environment, citizens are no longer passive audiences but active participants who shape discourse through digital interaction (Agana & Prempeh, 2022). However, this expanded participation does not automatically improve democratic quality, as digital communication is increasingly mediated by platform structures and algorithmic logic (Giacomini & Paura, 2023).

The growing dominance of algorithm-driven communication introduces new risks to democratic processes. Algorithmic curation, filter bubbles, and echo chambers fragment the information environment and intensify political polarisation (Boutsikaris & Polykalas, 2025). The rise of AI-generated disinformation further complicates the integrity of public discourse, enabling rapid manipulation of narratives and weakening epistemic trust (Olaiya et al., 2025). These developments indicate a shift in digital democracy from early optimism about participation toward increasing concern over algorithmic power, platform governance, and information control (Albornoz et al., 2025).

Within this global transformation, Indonesia presents a distinctive democratic paradox. The country exhibits one of the highest levels of digital participation and social media engagement in the world, yet this expansion is accompanied (Saud & Margono, 2021) by declining deliberative quality, polarisation, and the strategic use of digital mobilisation, including the phenomenon of political 'buzzers'. Moreover, the Indonesian democratic process increasingly reflects what can be described as 'viral justice', where public pressure generated in digital spaces influences institutional responses and policy actions (Rustamaji et al., 2025). This dynamic highlights how digital communication does not merely reflect political processes but actively constitutes institutional behaviour, resonating with perspectives from the Communicative Constitution of Organisations (CCO) and institutional theory, where communication practices shape governance responses and legitimacy (Donges, 2022).

Despite extensive global scholarship on digital media and democracy, most studies focus on isolated dimensions such as participation, disinformation, or platform governance (Freeman, 2016). Few provide an integrated framework that explains how digital media restructure democratic quality across multiple dimensions simultaneously (Kneuer, 2016). Furthermore, research that situates these transformations within the Indonesian context remains limited, particularly in understanding how digital communication, algorithmic mediation, and institutional responses interact to shape democratic trajectories (Salsabilla et al., 2025).

This study addresses this gap by examining how digital media reshape democratic quality within the digital public sphere. Rather than separating analytical dimensions, the research asks: How do digital media restructure democratic quality through transformations in information flows, public discourse, civic participation, and government accountability? By combining bibliometric mapping and qualitative thematic analysis, this study aims to identify dominant shifts in global research and explain their implications for digital democracy, particularly within the evolving Indonesian communication ecosystem.

X is a live-streaming digital platform that enables real-time interactive communication between content creators and audiences. Within communication studies, X represents a shift from one-way mass communication toward participatory and networked communication, where users simultaneously act as producers and consumers of content (Dreier & Pirker, 2023). This interactive structure reflects broader transformations in digital media ecosystems, particularly in shaping online communities, public discourse, and mediated political communication (Nudo et al., 2025).

In the political domain, digital media have become central arenas for political communication and opinion formation. Social media platforms facilitate direct interaction between citizens, political actors, and institutions, transforming how political narratives are constructed and circulated (Hasrullah & Suherman, 2025). Digital communication enables rapid mobilisation, real-time discourse, and decentralised agenda formation, reducing traditional gatekeeping roles while increasing the influence of networked publics (Lee et al., 2022). Consequently, digital media play a critical role in shaping political participation, public deliberation, and democratic processes in contemporary society. Social media platforms such

as Facebook, Instagram, and X have become central arenas for political communication (Baarda, 2018).

Digital democracy also includes the adoption of electronic voting (e-voting), which has been implemented in several advanced and developing countries to enhance electoral participation, efficiency, and transparency (Cocon-Marroquin et al., 2024). Countries such as Estonia have pioneered nationwide internet voting, while other nations, including India and Brazil, have adopted electronic voting technologies to modernise electoral processes (Sertkaya et al., 2022). Although e-voting offers opportunities for expanding democratic participation, it also raises concerns regarding cybersecurity, trust, and digital inequality, highlighting the complex relationship between technology and democratic governance (Samihardjo & Lest, 2021).

In Indonesia, the rapid expansion of digital media has significantly reshaped political communication and public discourse, particularly through social media-driven mobilisation and digital participation (Fajar Maulana et al., 2025). However, this expansion is also associated with increasing polarisation, information disorder, and the strategic use of coordinated online actors, often referred to as political 'buzzers', which influence public narratives and democratic deliberation (Rumata & Sastrosubroto, 2024).

This study aims to examine how digital media reshape democratic quality within the global digital public sphere. Rather than focusing on how digital media, through algorithmic mediation and platform governance, restructure democratic quality in the digital public sphere, particularly in shaping information flows, public discourse, civic participation, and institutional legitimacy, as illustrative cases of broader transformations in digital democracy.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a hybrid bibliometric–qualitative systematic review approach to examine how digital media reshape democratic quality within the global digital public sphere. Rather than collecting primary data from individuals, the study synthesises peer-reviewed scholarly literature to identify conceptual patterns, thematic developments, and structural shifts in research on media and digital democracy (Marvi & Foroudi, 2023). Accordingly, this research is positioned as a qualitative systematic review with bibliometric mapping, combining macro-level knowledge mapping with interpretive meta-synthesis of academic literature.

The bibliometric dataset was derived exclusively from the Scopus database, selected due to its rigorous indexing standards, comprehensive citation metadata, and strong coverage in political communication and media studies. Scopus is widely recognised as a reliable source for constructing credible bibliometric maps because of its standardised peer-reviewed publication records and consistent bibliographic structure (Subekti et al., 2024). The dataset covers the period 2020–2025, reflecting the contemporary phase of digital democracy shaped by platformisation, algorithmic communication, and generative artificial intelligence. The search query was constructed to apply all technical filters during the identification stage:

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TITLE-ABS-KEY ("media" AND "democracy" AND "digital age")  
AND PUBYEAR > 2020 AND PUBYEAR < 2025  
AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "cp"))  
AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))
```

The initial search returned 191 records. After removing duplicates and conducting title–abstract screening for thematic relevance to digital democracy, 56 publications were retained for full qualitative synthesis.

The study follows the PRISMA framework to ensure transparency and reproducibility. Technical filters (year, document type, and language) were applied during the identification phase through the Scopus search string. The screening stage focused on thematic relevance based on titles and abstracts, while the eligibility stage involved full-text assessment to confirm that selected studies substantively addressed media, digital communication, and democratic processes (Mishra & Mishra, 2023). This corrected flow ensures methodological consistency and eliminates procedural bias.

From the identification stage to the inclusion stage (Figure 1), the methodical literature selection process is depicted in the PRISMA Flow Diagram. During the identification phase, researchers extracted 191 articles from the database they searched, all of which were free of

duplicates or had been removed by automatic methods. After that, all the articles went through the screening phase, during which the researchers looked over the abstracts and titles to make sure there were no articles that needed to be eliminated. The suitability of 191 complete reports for the research requirements was then assessed at the eligibility stage. At this point, several articles were eliminated because they did not fit the criteria, such as because of the year of publication ($n = 63$), the type of publishing ($n = 61$), or the language used ($n = 11$). 56 studies were ultimately deemed appropriate and added to the study's literature review following this stringent selection procedure. According to PRISMA criteria, this flowchart illustrates a clear, methodical, and standardised selection process.

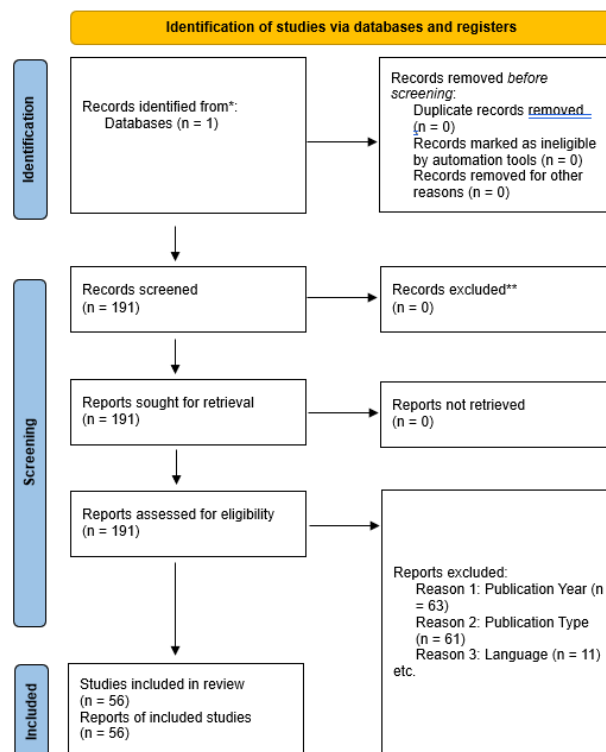


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart 2020-2025

Source: Created by the author based on the Scopus Database 2020-2025 (2025)

Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer to map intellectual structures, co-occurrence networks, and thematic clusters in the literature. This method allows the identification of dominant research themes, author collaboration patterns, and emerging conceptual shifts within the field of digital democracy (Sumartias et al., 2025). Co-occurrence analysis of keywords was used to visualise research clusters related to participation, public discourse, disinformation, algorithmic governance, and digital public space.

To complement bibliometric mapping, qualitative meta-synthesis was conducted using NVivo 12 Plus. The unit of analysis consisted of the full texts of the selected core articles, not merely abstracts, to ensure depth of interpretation (Amri et al., 2022).

The thematic coding process followed an iterative and interpretive approach. Initially, open coding was conducted to identify recurring concepts related to media, democracy, participation, public discourse, and governance across the selected literature (Cheung, 2025). These initial codes were subsequently refined and organised into broader analytical categories through axial coding, enabling the identification of key thematic dimensions such as digital participation, algorithmic mediation, information disorder, and platform governance (Maleksadati et al., 2023). The analysis then proceeded to selective coding, through which relationships among these thematic categories were synthesised to construct an integrated interpretation of how digital media reshape democratic quality within the digital public sphere (Kneuer & Salzborn, 2016). This meta-synthesis approach allows interpretive integration of conceptual insights across studies rather than simple description.

The hybrid approach strengthens analytical robustness by combining structural mapping (bibliometrics) with interpretive synthesis (qualitative systematic review). Bibliometric analysis reveals macro-level research trajectories and dominant thematic shifts, while qualitative meta-synthesis provides conceptual depth and theoretical interpretation of how digital media transform democratic processes (Chakma et al., 2024).

This study relies solely on Scopus-indexed English-language publications, which may exclude relevant regional scholarship and non-indexed research. Additionally, bibliometric mapping reflects patterns within the selected dataset and may not capture all emerging developments in rapidly evolving digital communication environments (Khader, 2024). Nevertheless, the integration of systematic review and bibliometric mapping enhances validity and provides a comprehensive overview of global research on digital democracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge structure and epistemic profile of the literature, inter-cluster dynamics, and the restructuring of the digital public sphere

The PRISMA selection resulted in 56 core publications forming the analytical foundation of this study. In terms of epistemic composition, the dataset reflects a balanced but heterogeneous knowledge base: a significant portion of the studies are empirical (including quantitative big-data, computational, and qualitative case studies), while others are conceptual and theoretical works focusing on the digital public sphere, platform governance, and algorithmic communication (Liu, 2025). This combination indicates that the field of digital democracy is both empirically expanding and theoretically evolving, reflecting a broader socio-technical transition where technological infrastructures increasingly shape political communication and democratic processes (Caetano et al., 2016). Rather than representing isolated research strands, bibliometric mapping reveals an integrated knowledge structure where digital media function simultaneously as a communication infrastructure, a participatory arena, and a mechanism of informational power. This structure reflects the transformation of democracy into a socio-technical system where communication, technology, and institutional responses interact dynamically (Fischer & Jarren, 2024).

The VOSviewer keyword network reveals several thematic clusters—public sphere and political communication (red), platform and information ecology (green), misinformation and disinformation (yellow), governance and legitimacy (blue), and digital participation and social dynamics (purple). However, these clusters are not independent; they interact through inter-cluster tensions that shape the evolution of digital democracy (Trice & Jones, 2020). One of the most significant frictions occurs between the public sphere cluster and the misinformation cluster. While the public sphere presupposes rational-critical discourse and informational diversity, the proliferation of disinformation disrupts deliberative communication by fragmenting shared epistemic foundations and intensifying polarisation (Fârte, 2024).

This disruption reflects a structural transformation of the digital public sphere, where communicative rationality increasingly competes with algorithmically amplified narratives and information disorder. Similarly, the interaction between platform governance and participation clusters illustrates how algorithmic visibility both enables and constrains democratic engagement, reinforcing the role of platforms as mediators of political communication (Jha & Singh, 2025). These inter-cluster dynamics demonstrate that the evolution of digital democracy is shaped not only by technological innovation but also by tensions between participation, information integrity, and algorithmic control (Sánchez Medero & Sánchez Medero, 2025).

From global patterns to local democratic dynamics and socio-technical transformation of democratic quality

Bibliometric analysis shows that scholarship on digital democracy is dominated by research from technologically advanced countries, particularly the United States and several European nations. This dominance reflects stronger digital infrastructures and research ecosystems. However, global thematic trends—such as algorithmic mediation, disinformation, and platform governance—extend beyond these contexts and manifest differently across national democracies (Antopol'skii & Efremenko, 2022). In the Indonesian context, these global transformations translate into distinctive democratic dynamics. The expansion of social media has significantly increased political participation and digital engagement, yet it has also

intensified polarisation, coordinated online mobilisation, and information disorder (Intyaswati & Fairuzza, 2023).

Thus, global shifts toward algorithmic governance and platform-mediated communication are not confined to Western democracies but are reproduced in localised forms shaped by socio-political conditions, digital literacy levels, and communication cultures (Katzenbach & Ulbricht, 2019). This translation from global patterns to local realities highlights how digital democracy operates as a hybrid socio-technical system where universal technological structures interact with context-specific institutional and cultural dynamics (Novelli & Sandri, 2025).

Taken together, the integrated findings reveal a broader socio-technical transformation of democracy. The central shift is not merely from traditional to digital communication, but from participation-driven democratic expansion toward platform-mediated and algorithmically structured democratic communication (Paulis et al., 2025). While digital media continue to enable civic participation and broaden access to information, the increasing dominance of algorithmic systems reshapes visibility, discourse quality, and epistemic trust (Auškalnienė, 2025).

Consequently, the key democratic challenge in the digital age is less about enabling participation and more about governing information flows, algorithmic power, and communicative legitimacy within the digital public sphere (Cantarini, 2025). This transformation situates digital democracy within a socio-technical framework where communication infrastructures, technological mediation, and institutional responses jointly shape democratic trajectories (Campo-Ruiz, 2025).

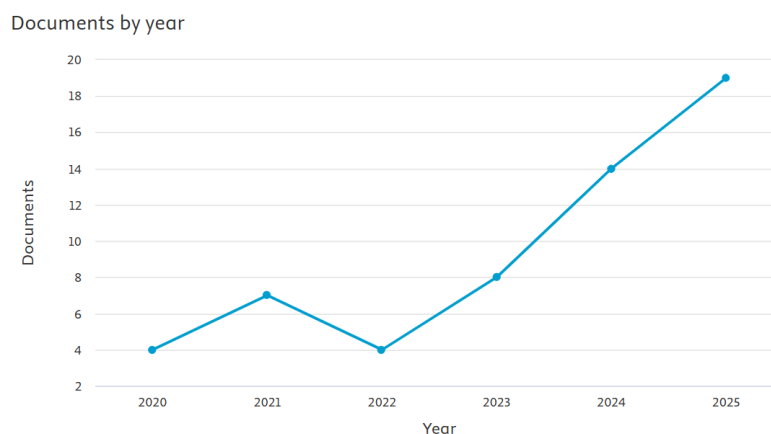


Figure 2. Publication of research by years (2020-2025)
Source: Scopus database 2020-2025 (2025)

Demonstrates a growing tendency in media, democracy, and digital era publications between 2020 and 2025 (Figure 2). Four texts were published in 2020; by 2021, that number had risen to seven. The following trend revealed a notable increase, despite the fact that it fell once more to 4 publications in 2022. The number of publications rose to eight in 2023 and then to fourteen in 2024. The year 2025 was the most productive during the analysis period, with a total of 19 publications. This developing tendency demonstrates that as technology is incorporated more and more into public life and political processes, scholarly interest in topics such as digital democracy, information distribution, social media's role, algorithms, and platform governance is expanding. A further indication of the scientific community's quick reaction to current events like the emergence of generative AI, digital polarisation, and the growing significance of online public spaces in contemporary democracies is the surge of publications over the past two years.

Displaying the distribution of publications by nation that support media, democracy, and the digital age research (Figure 3). With 15 documents, the United States is the most productive nation, solidifying its standing as a major global hub for research on democracy, digital technology, and political communication. The robustness of European research traditions in the areas of digital media and democratic governance is demonstrated by the fact that Spain comes second with six publications, followed by Germany with five. Three publications each from Italy, Singapore, and the 'undefined' category showed contributions from Asia and articles that did

not specify the author's country of origin. In the meantime, two articles each from Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Colombia demonstrate the regional diversity in digital democracy research, despite their smaller numbers. Overall, this graph demonstrates that nations with robust internet infrastructure and research capabilities dominate the scholarly conversation on media and democracy in the digital age, while it also demonstrates a very broad distribution across different global regions.

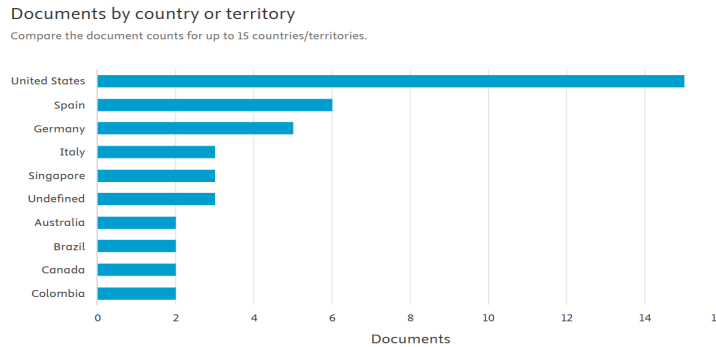


Figure 3. Country distribution of publications (2020-2025)
 Source: Scopus database 2020-2025 (2025)

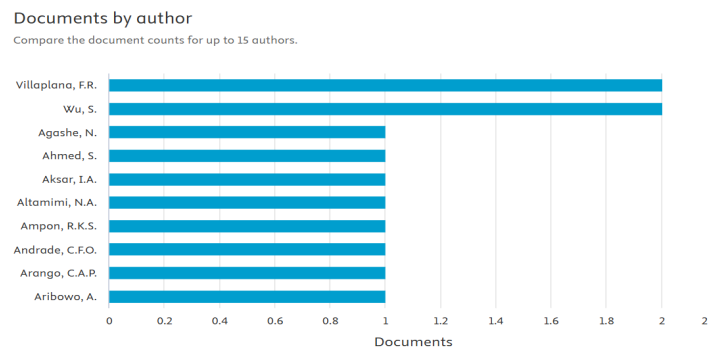


Figure 4. Publication based on the authors (2020-2025)
 Source: Scopus database 2020-2025 (2025)

Displaying a list of the writers who have written the most about media, democracy, and the digital age (Figure 4). According to the data, the most reliable contributors to the literature on democratic transition in the digital age are Villaplana, F.R., and Wu, S., who each have two articles at the top of the list. Agashe, N., Ahmed, S., Aksar, I.A., Altamimi, N.A., Ampon, R.K.S., Andrade, C.F.O., Arango, C.A.P., and Aribowo, A. each contributed one publication, demonstrating the breadth of research in this area and the involvement of numerous researchers from a variety of academic fields, including political science, digital social studies, communication, and information technology. As a result of the increasing scholarly interest in disinformation, political polarisation, algorithms, and digital participation, this pattern shows that despite the presence of a few relatively dominant authors, contributions to the study of media and digital democracy continue to be collaborative and transnational. Overall, the publication structure depicted in this graph reflects a variety of viewpoints and methods for comprehending the connection between digital media and contemporary democratic processes, rather than being focused on a single set of researchers.

Showcasing the organisations that produce the most publications about media, democracy, and the digital era (Figure 5). Universities in Spain are actively involved in the research of digital media and democracy, as evidenced by the three publications each of the top two universities, Universidad de Murcia and Universitat de València. The following are two publications, each from the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Pennsylvania State University, and the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information. The strength of international research in the domains of digital technology, platform governance, and political communication is reflected in the predominance of institutions from

the US, Singapore, and Europe. Additionally, several organisations donated one publication each, including the Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities, Laboratório Central do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, Ghent University-IMEC, and the Centre for Applied Social Research. This pattern demonstrates that research on media and digital democracy is diverse and involves a range of academic institutions, from digital laboratories to social research centres and communication schools. Overall, this graph depicts a rather dispersed research environment, but it also identifies institutions with robust research capabilities that are actively investigating the dynamics of digital media as a crucial component of the modern democratic process.

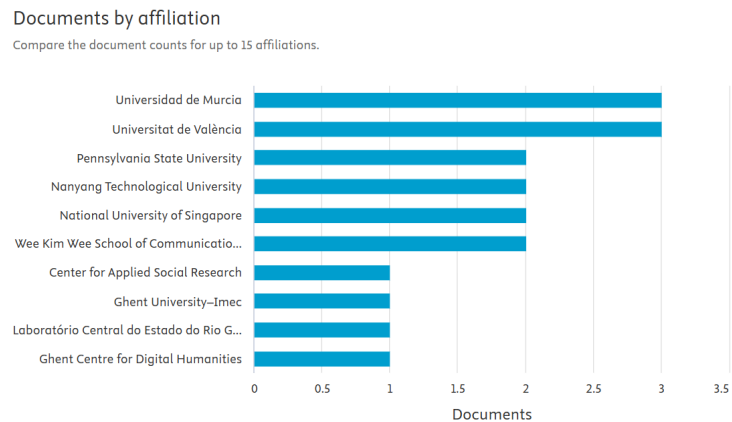


Figure 5. Publication based on affiliation (2020-2025)
 Source: Scopus database 2020-2025 (2025)

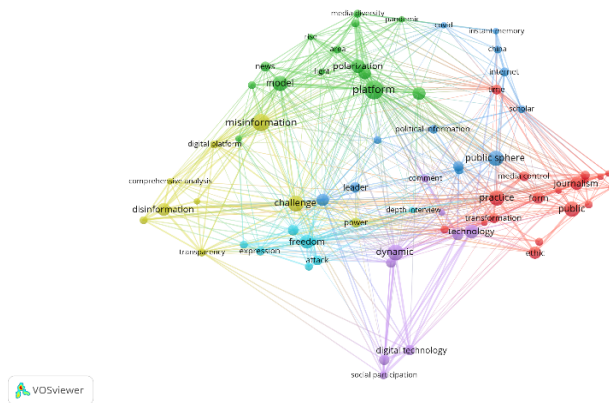


Figure 6. Keyword co-occurrence network visualisation 2020-2025
 Source: VOSviewer (2025)

Displaying the primary literary themes of media, democracy, and the digital age, broken down into multiple-coloured groupings (Figure 6). The themes of public sphere, politics, journalism, and communication are the emphasis of the red cluster, which highlights the importance of the digital public sphere as a forum for social interaction and political conversation. By emphasising phrases like platform, media, information, and population, the green cluster draws attention to the ecology of digital platforms and how the dissemination of information influences public opinion and behaviour. Terms like ‘misinformation’, ‘disinformation’, and ‘challenge’ are included in the yellow cluster, highlighting the prevalence of problems related to the propagation of hoaxes, information manipulation, and epistemic hurdles in digital democracies. In the context of digital communication, the blue cluster groups phrases like freedom, policy, and legitimacy, showing a study focus on normative aspects, freedom of expression, and democratic legitimacy. The relationship between technical advancements, social transformation, and patterns of political engagement is symbolised by the purple cluster, which focuses on digital technology, dynamics, and social participation. In order to comprehend the quality of democracy in the digital era, concerns related to technology,

media, politics, and social behaviour intersect. This is reflected in the interconnectedness between clusters, as shown by the network lines. All things considered, this term map shows how international literature sees digital democracy as a complicated field that offers both potential and problems for revolutionising contemporary political communication.

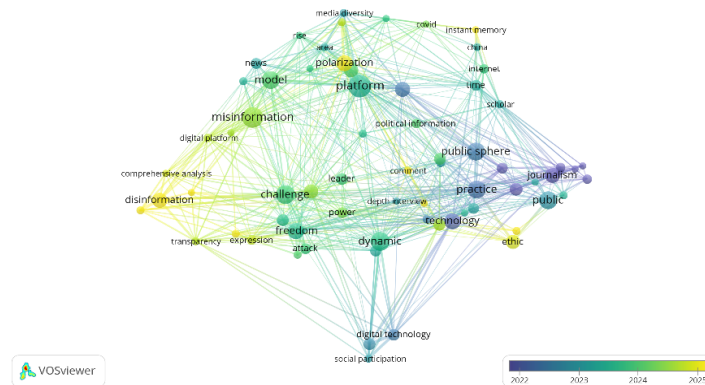


Figure 7. Keyword co-occurrence overlay visualisation 2020-2025
Source: VOSviewer (2025)

Figure 7 demonstrates the dynamics of media, democracy, and digital age research subjects according to the year they first appeared in the literature. Green and yellow denote subjects that have gained prominence in the most recent time (2023-2025), whilst blue represents keywords that were more common in the early period (2020-2022). Keywords like challenge, misinformation, and disinformation are typically on the light green to yellow spectrum on the left, suggesting that hoaxes, information manipulation, and epistemic problems are becoming more and more prevalent subjects in current studies. The cluster in the centre, which includes the terms 'platform', 'polarisation', and 'model' demonstrates a change in scholarly emphasis toward conversations about the influence of digital platforms, algorithms, and the political ramifications of social polarisation. The blue to green spectrum of keywords like public sphere, journalism, practice, and technology, on the other hand, shows that topics like the public sphere, the function of journalism, and digital political communication practices have served as the basis for research from the beginning and are still being studied today. Terms like 'digital technology', 'dynamic', and 'social participation' are displayed at the bottom in a variety of colours, suggesting that digital technology is consistently considered as a factor in social dynamics and political participation. All things considered, this visualisation shows that, especially between 2023 and 2025, international research is moving away from its original emphasis on the idea of public space and media practices and towards more modern concerns like disinformation, platform algorithms, polarisation, and difficulties brought on by cutting-edge digital technology.

Algorithmic governance argument

The NVivo thematic distribution reveals a significant imbalance between the prominence of digital participation and the relatively limited attention to governance and regulatory mechanisms. While participation-related concepts dominate the discourse, governance-oriented themes appear less frequently, indicating that the global trajectory of digital democracy has emphasised engagement more than institutional regulation. This imbalance suggests a structural condition in which societies are increasingly capable of participating in digital communication yet remain institutionally underprepared to govern the algorithmic infrastructures that shape visibility, information flows, and public discourse.

The distribution of the most common keywords found in media, democracy, and digital age-related literature is shown, with the size of each box denoting the word's frequency of occurrence across the whole dataset. The terms 'media', 'political', and 'platform' occupy the largest boxes, suggesting that these three ideas are essential to conversations on digital democracy, whether they are about the function of the media, political processes, or the influence of digital platforms on information flow. Keywords like 'digital', 'social', 'public', and

'communication' come in a variety of sizes, highlighting the significance of public space, social interaction, and communication styles as essential components of the democratic process in the digital age. Furthermore, terms like 'social media', 'process', 'participation', and 'technologies' suggest that the research focuses on the way social media and digital technology support the process of political engagement. Smaller keywords like 'research', 'model', 'analysis', 'governance', 'democracy', 'role', 'framework', and 'data', on the other hand, demonstrate the variety of analytical techniques that researchers employ to comprehend these phenomena. These include studies on theoretical models, platform governance, data analysis, and frameworks for digital democracy (Figure 8).

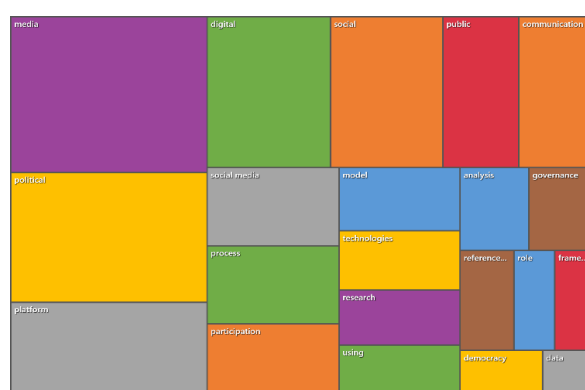


Figure 8. Treempa visualisation literature references 2020-2025
 Source: NVivo12 Plus analysis (2025)

Overall, this tree map demonstrates how literature creates a rich and interdisciplinary research ecosystem, with a primary emphasis on media, politics, and the function of platforms. It also covers topics related to participation, technology, and governance that deepen our comprehension of how democracy is changing in the digital age.

Displaying how articles are grouped according to how similar the terminology and keywords used in the abstract, title, and author are (Figure 9). Thematic clusters that emerge organically from patterns of resemblance in the literature are shown by the varied colours used to display each group of articles. As demonstrated by the writings of Zhang, Ansell, and Quintanilha, the blue cluster typically includes pieces addressing the subjects of digital democracy, public space, and political involvement. According to Wang, Pogodina, and Kyprianou's research, the green cluster stands for papers that address platform governance, digital legislation, and communication transformation. Pierri, Turner, Romanishyn, and Maynor's research reflects the orange and brown clusters, which group publications that emphasise issues of polarisation, deception, and epistemic hurdles in modern democracy. In the meantime, the purple cluster links articles—such as those by Grey, Aruleselvan, and Shah—that highlight how the media, framing, agenda-setting, and communication processes shape public opinion. With four primary orientations—digital democracy and public space, governance and platformisation, misinformation and polarisation, and traditional political communication, including framing and agenda setting—this grouping pattern demonstrates the literature's wide yet connected nature. As a result, this visualisation demonstrates how research on media and democracy in the digital era is evolving across multiple disciplines while still focusing on fundamental themes that highlight the intricate interrelationships between communication, technology, and democratic processes.

It exposes the primary thematic focus in writing about media, democracy, and the digital age by displaying the terms that appear most frequently in the analysis. The most used phrase is 'media', which supports the idea that digital media is the main topic of debate in current research. Other keywords like 'political', 'digital', 'social', and 'participation' demonstrate how strongly studies of digital democracy are tied to online social interactions, political processes, and technologically mediated patterns of community engagement. The frequent use of the terms 'platform', 'information', and 'communication' also suggests that there is a great deal of focus on how digital platforms control the dissemination of information, influence public opinion, and alter political communication patterns. Words like 'governance', 'public', 'content',

enabled by digital media. However, the integrated findings of this study demonstrate that contemporary democratic processes are increasingly structured by algorithmic mediation, platform governance, and informational visibility rather than participation alone (Krouglov, 2024). This implies that democratic quality in the digital public sphere should be understood as a socio-technical construct in which communication infrastructures, algorithmic filtering, and platform power co-produce public discourse, political legitimacy, and institutional responsiveness (Bojić et al., 2025).

The study, therefore, extends the theory of the digital public sphere by introducing the concept of algorithmically structured democratic communication, where platforms operate not only as communication intermediaries but also as governance actors that shape epistemic conditions of democracy (García & Calvo, 2024). This reconceptualisation contributes to communication theory by linking media ecology, platformisation, and democratic legitimacy into a unified analytical framework for understanding contemporary digital democracy (Küsters & Störring, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the evolution of digital democracy is marked by a structural shift toward the platformisation of democratic communication, where algorithmic systems, platform infrastructures, and mediated visibility increasingly shape political participation, public discourse, and democratic legitimacy. The integrated bibliometric and qualitative findings demonstrate a dominant transformation from participatory expansion toward algorithmically structured democratic communication, in which digital platforms function not merely as communication intermediaries but as governance actors that regulate information flows and political visibility. From a socio-technical perspective, contemporary democracy is no longer fully governed by formal state institutions alone; rather, the digital public sphere is increasingly hosted by private platforms, where communication processes constitute institutional responses and shape public legitimacy. This transformation also reveals a distinctive democratic dynamic in Indonesia, where digital communication creates a form of 'viral justice' (#NoViralNoJustice), enabling public pressure generated in online arenas to accelerate institutional responses and reshape governance outcomes. These findings indicate that digital democracy is evolving into a hybrid system in which communication infrastructures, algorithmic mediation, and institutional behaviour are deeply intertwined.

The study further identifies a structural imbalance between expanding digital participation and limited governance capacity, highlighting that the central challenge of contemporary democracy is not merely participation but algorithmic accountability. Rather than relying solely on digital literacy or content regulation, democratic sustainability increasingly depends on transparency in algorithmic decision-making and platform governance. In this context, Electronic System Providers (PSE) must ensure transparency of their recommendation engines, as democratic participation cannot be considered fully informed if citizens do not understand how political content is filtered, ranked, and amplified. Framing regulation as algorithmic accountability—rather than censorship—offers a pathway to address the regulation-freedom paradox within digital democracies. Overall, this research advances a socio-technical understanding of digital democracy, demonstrating that the future of democratic legitimacy will depend on the governance of algorithmic infrastructures, transparency of platform power, and the evolving relationship between communication, institutions, and digital public spheres.

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