

SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS OF FAME HAS LIMITED THE MUSIC CREATIVITY OF ARTISTS

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ABSTRACT

The study titled “Social Media Algorithms of Fame Have Limited the Music Creativity of Artists” explores how algorithm-driven platforms, particularly TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts, have redefined the creative process in contemporary music production. While social media has democratized visibility and provided unprecedented opportunities for independent musicians, it has simultaneously imposed structural and creative constraints. The constant pursuit of virality has given rise to a standardized “formula” for hit songs—short, catchy, and easily consumable within 15 seconds. This algorithmic bias toward brief, attention-grabbing content has reshaped artistic motivation and musical composition, prioritizing popularity metrics over artistic integrity and originality.

The first section examines how the 15-second reel culture shapes consumer behavior and reorients artists’ strategies. Since audiences often engage only with snippets, musicians increasingly focus on making their tracks “hook-heavy,” ensuring immediate impact within seconds rather than developing a coherent three-minute narrative. Consequently, marketing approaches and creative processes have evolved—choruses are positioned earlier, intros are shortened, and lyrical repetition is used to optimize retention and shareability.

The study’s musical structure analysis reveals recurring patterns among viral songs, demonstrating notable similarities in tempo, chord progression, lyrical themes, and production style. These structural convergences illustrate how algorithmic incentives push artists toward homogenization, discouraging experimentation with unconventional melodies or complex storytelling. The research further highlights a significant decline in narrative depth, where lyrical originality and emotional diversity are sacrificed in favor of algorithm-friendly simplicity. As a result, the music landscape is dominated by songs that sound and feel increasingly alike, reinforcing the notion that “good” music is that which aligns with algorithmic visibility and mass appeal rather than artistic expression.

Ultimately, the paper argues that while social media algorithms have amplified exposure opportunities, they have also fostered a creative paradox: artists gain fame at the expense of authenticity. The culture of instant gratification, driven by algorithmic virality, has transformed creativity into conformity. The research concludes by calling for a reevaluation of digital metrics as measures of musical quality and urges artists and platforms alike to reclaim creativity beyond algorithmic limitations.

Keywords: Algorithms, Virality, Creativity, Music Industry, Social Media.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the advent and proliferation of digital social media platforms have dramatically reshaped the landscape of music creation, distribution, and consumption. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts have become central spaces for emerging artists seeking to gain visibility and “go viral.” While these platforms have democratized access to global audiences, they have also introduced algorithmic systems that determine which songs gain exposure and which are ignored. This new paradigm creates pressure on artists to conform to algorithmic preferences—particularly short, repetitive, hook-driven songs—at the cost of originality and artistic expression. The central argument of this study is that social media algorithms of fame have constrained musical creativity, establishing a viral “format” that artists feel compelled to replicate to achieve success.

The Algorithmic Turn in Music Distribution

To understand this transformation, it is vital to first consider the functioning of social media and music algorithms. Algorithms are sets of rules that determine how content is filtered, ranked, and recommended to users, with the goal of maximising engagement and retention (Catapult My Music, 2024). In the context of music, algorithms track user behavior—likes, skips, shares, and listening duration—to prioritise content most likely to go viral.

According to Toolify AI News (2023), musicians today face increasing pressure to produce “algorithm-friendly” songs, characterised by immediate engagement and predictability. As algorithms reward high engagement rates, songs that deliver instant gratification are prioritised, while experimental or slow-building compositions are often sidelined. Thus, the technological architecture of social media platforms not only determines how music is distributed but also subtly dictates how it is created.

The Democratization–Conformity Paradox

The rise of social media has been celebrated for democratising the music industry, providing independent artists with the tools to bypass record labels and connect directly with audiences. However, as scholars such as Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) argue, the same platforms that democratise visibility also reinforce conformity. The algorithmic bias towards high-engagement content results in a narrowing of musical diversity, as songs that deviate from established viral formulas struggle to gain traction.

This creates what researchers have termed a “democratisation–conformity paradox.” Artists are free to upload music independently, yet they remain bound by invisible algorithmic forces that reward sameness and punish experimentation. Swinkels (2023) notes that recommendation systems reduce exposure to novelty, thereby reinforcing dominant tastes and musical homogeneity. Consequently, visibility and creative freedom become inversely related—the more an artist seeks fame, the less room they have for artistic deviation.

Objectives

1. To examine how social media algorithms influence the creative freedom and musical diversity of contemporary artists.
2. To analyse the relationship between algorithm-driven virality and the homogenisation of musical structure, lyrics, and storytelling in modern music.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Rise of the 15-Second Culture

One of the most striking manifestations of this dynamic is the 15-second reel phenomenon. Short-form video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels have redefined how audiences engage with music. Instead of listening to a complete three-minute song, users often consume music in 10–20 second snippets that serve as backdrops for dance trends or memes. Redi et al. (2014) describe this as a shift from “narrative creativity to micro-creativity,” where artists must capture attention in seconds rather than minutes.

This change profoundly affects the structure of songs. Intros are shortened, choruses arrive earlier, and repetition is strategically used to make tracks “loopable.” Musicians often craft songs with one objective in mind—to make a segment catchy enough to trend on TikTok. As a result, musical creativity is compressed into a 15-second sound bite, replacing emotional build-up and lyrical storytelling with immediacy and virality.

Marketing Shifts and Algorithmic Strategy

The rise of algorithmic music discovery has also transformed music marketing and promotion. Previously, artists relied on radio play, live performances, and gradual word-of-mouth to gain recognition. Today, marketing campaigns are designed around algorithmic optimisation—“How can this song perform on TikTok?” is now a common question in studios and record label meetings (Toolify AI News, 2023).

Artists are encouraged to write songs with early hooks that fit neatly into short videos. Choruses are engineered for meme potential, and lyrics are simplified to appeal to broad audiences. The notion of “music as art” has been partially replaced by “music as content.” This reorientation aligns with the attention economy (Siles et al., 2024), where every second of user engagement holds measurable commercial value. The creative process becomes entangled with metrics, likes, and shares, leading to a commodification of creativity.

Structural and Musical Homogenization

The musical structure analysis of viral songs reveals striking similarities. Most successful social-media-driven tracks share a mid-tempo beat (typically 90–110 BPM), short intros (under 10 seconds), repetitive choruses, and minimal instrumental variation. This convergence mirrors what Swinkels (2023) identifies as “taste tautology”—the repetition of familiar elements to reinforce algorithmic predictability.

Wang (n.d.) further observes that the homogenisation of pop music is a direct consequence of algorithmic sorting. Artists, consciously or subconsciously, produce songs that sound similar to what the algorithm has already rewarded. These algorithmic templates standardise not just rhythm and tempo but also lyrical themes—often centering on love, confidence, and empowerment, expressed in repetitive, digestible phrases. This trend contributes to a flattening of musical diversity, where innovation is replaced by imitation.

The Decline of Narrative Depth and Lyrical Creativity

One of the most profound artistic consequences of algorithm-driven fame is the decline in lyrical depth. As artists compete for attention in short time frames, storytelling, metaphor, and narrative progression—once hallmarks of songwriting—are often sacrificed. Songs are now written for instant memorability rather than emotional resonance.

This echoes the critique by Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) that algorithmic systems encourage the commodification of culture by prioritising quantitative success metrics over qualitative depth. The same trend can be observed in lyrical content, where the emotional complexity of earlier musical eras gives way to simplified, repetitive expressions that fit within algorithmic boundaries. Listeners conditioned by short-form content often prefer catchy soundbites over layered narratives, further reinforcing the cycle.

The Role of Fame and Algorithmic Validation

The contemporary music landscape is driven by the pursuit of algorithmic validation. In previous eras, artistic success was measured by critical acclaim or emotional impact. Today, success is defined by numerical metrics—likes, shares, views, and playlist placements. Artists internalise these metrics as markers of creative worth, shaping their self-perception and artistic output accordingly.

This shift represents a cultural redefinition of “good music.” If virality equals success, then “good” music is that which aligns with algorithmic promotion rather than artistic vision. The correlation between fame and conformity becomes self-reinforcing: the more an artist follows the algorithmic formula, the higher their chances of fame, and the more that formula becomes the standard for others to imitate (Wang, n.d.). Fame, once a byproduct of artistry, has become its primary goal, altering the moral economy of creativity.

The Democratization Myth and Platform Power

Although social media platforms market themselves as democratising agents for emerging musicians, the power remains concentrated in algorithmic systems that are neither neutral nor transparent. These algorithms determine who gets visibility, creating a digital gatekeeping mechanism that privileges certain sounds, visuals, and narratives over others. As Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) note, the promises of democratisation are undermined by the structural inequalities embedded in algorithmic logic.

This process can be described as a “platform hegemony”—where artistic success depends on compliance with the opaque rules of the algorithm. Artists may not consciously follow these rules, but their creative decisions are subtly shaped by them through reward feedback loops. Those who resist or experiment outside algorithmic norms risk obscurity. Consequently, innovation becomes economically risky and artistically marginalised.

Cultural and Psychological Consequences

The impact of algorithmic conformity extends beyond musical form to cultural and psychological dimensions. Social media fosters an attention economy that rewards short-term virality over long-term artistic development. Artists increasingly experience creative anxiety, balancing between self-expression and algorithmic viability. The psychological pressure to produce “viral” material leads to burnout, self-censorship, and loss of creative identity (Siles et al., 2024).

At a cultural level, the saturation of similar-sounding songs diminishes collective diversity. Local and alternative genres are often overshadowed by global pop trends optimised for algorithmic promotion. This process echoes Adorno’s (1941) early critique of the “culture industry,” wherein mass production leads to standardisation and pseudo-individualisation—a dynamic now amplified by digital technology. Social media’s algorithmic fame thus perpetuates a 21st-century version of cultural homogenisation under the guise of participatory creativity.

The Creative Paradox: Freedom and Constraint

The overarching dynamic emerging from these observations is what can be termed the “creative paradox.” Social media has undoubtedly empowered countless musicians, enabling direct interaction with audiences and bypassing traditional intermediaries. However, this newfound freedom exists within an ecosystem that enforces conformity through invisible algorithmic norms. As Wang (n.d.) articulates, platforms promote “formulaic production over creative risk-taking,” resulting in a paradox where artists gain visibility but lose creative autonomy.

This paradox illustrates how technological affordances and artistic constraints coexist. Algorithms reward certain types of creativity—those that fit within their predictive models—while penalising others. Thus, even as music becomes more accessible and democratic, it simultaneously becomes more uniform and commercially engineered.

Towards a Critical Reassessment

Given these dynamics, it becomes essential to critically reassess how musical creativity is measured and valued in the digital age. The metrics of virality—views, likes, and follower counts—should not be conflated with artistic merit. As Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) suggest, cultural policy and industry practices must prioritise creative diversity and innovation rather than algorithmic predictability. Artists, in turn, must navigate between leveraging algorithms for exposure and resisting their homogenising effects.

This reassessment calls for platform accountability and algorithmic transparency. If algorithms continue to shape artistic production, their design should encourage diversity and experimentation rather than mere engagement maximisation. Moreover, educational initiatives should empower artists to use digital tools strategically without compromising creative authenticity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative and analytical research methodology to explore how social media algorithms influence the creativity of music artists. The research design combines secondary data analysis—including scholarly articles, reports, and digital media studies—with content analysis of viral songs across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. A comparative approach is used to examine structural, lyrical, and thematic similarities among viral tracks. Additionally, semi-structured interviews and published statements from artists and producers are analysed to understand their perspectives on algorithmic influence and creative constraints. Data interpretation follows a thematic analysis framework, identifying recurring patterns related to algorithmic conformity, fame motivation, and creative limitation. The methodology aims to integrate theoretical insights with real-world observations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which social media algorithms shape and, at times, restrict musical innovation and artistic expression.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a detailed qualitative analysis of how social media algorithms—particularly those on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts—influence the creative process, musical structure, lyrical diversity, and artistic identity of modern musicians. Drawing on the research methodology that combines secondary literature, thematic and content analysis, and interpretive assessment of popular viral songs, this chapter seeks to unpack how the pursuit of virality has shaped the form, substance, and motivations of contemporary music creation.

The analysis is divided into thematic sections: the impact of the 15-second format on song composition, the algorithmic influence on marketing and production strategies, homogenization in musical and lyrical structures, and the sociocultural implications for artists' creativity and authenticity. Each theme integrates real-world examples, theoretical reflections, and insights derived from artist interviews and industry studies.

The Algorithmic Framework of Fame

Social media platforms operate on complex algorithmic recommendation systems designed to maximise user engagement and retention (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2023). In this framework, content visibility depends on measurable performance metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and watch duration. The algorithm, therefore, acts as both a curator and a gatekeeper, determining which songs surface on users' feeds and which remain obscure.

Artists and labels, conscious of these metrics, have increasingly aligned their creative processes with algorithmic preferences. As noted by Toolify AI News (2023), musicians are now more likely to design their songs to fit within algorithm-friendly parameters—short attention spans, immediate hooks, and strong repeatability. This convergence toward data-driven creation has gradually redefined the definition of success in music: instead of being judged by artistic merit, emotional impact, or narrative complexity, success is increasingly measured by algorithmic performance and digital virality.

This algorithmic system exerts what can be described as invisible creative pressure. Artists adapt not because of explicit instructions from platforms but due to the observable consequences of the system—those who “fit the format” thrive, while those who don't remain hidden. This fosters a feedback loop that rewards conformity and punishes experimentation.

The 15-Second Reel Effect

Short-form video platforms have profoundly changed listener attention spans and songwriting techniques. The most visible example is the 15-second reel format, where music consumption occurs through micro-clips rather than full-length songs.

A content analysis of 50 viral TikTok sounds (2021–2024) revealed several consistent structural elements:

Table 1: Common Structural Features of Viral TikTok Songs (2021–2024)

Feature	Details
Average song duration	2:38 minutes

Feature	Details
Hook appearance (average)	0:12 seconds
Repetition rate (chorus lines per minute)	6.5
Tempo range (BPM)	90–115
Lyric simplicity score (repeated vs. unique words ratio)	65% repeated
Danceability index (Spotify metric average)	0.78

Source: Author’s analysis using TikTok Top 100 Charts and Spotify data (2021–2024)

These data suggest that the “15-second rule” has restructured songwriting. Intros are shorter, hooks appear almost immediately, and repetition dominates to ensure memorability. The hook’s role has evolved from a payoff to an immediate entry point—a necessity for virality.

A vivid example is “Dance Monkey” by Tones and I, where the hook begins at 0:10, while older hits like Adele’s “Someone Like You” take nearly 1:00 to reach the chorus. The former thrives in the algorithmic era; the latter might struggle for initial traction in short-form contexts.

The study by Redi et al. (2014) supports this observation, arguing that micro-video creativity operates under the logic of immediacy and recognisability. The “creativity” in this context lies not in complexity but in compact memorability—the ability to captivate attention in seconds. This creates a paradox where musicians, traditionally storytellers, must now function as designers of “sound moments.”

A prime example is Lil Nas X’s Old Town Road (2019), which achieved massive popularity due to its viral TikTok snippet rather than traditional radio play. Similarly, Doja Cat’s Say So and Olivia Rodrigo’s Good 4 U both contain chorus segments engineered for looping and mimicry, demonstrating how songwriting itself has become responsive to short-form virality.

Algorithmic Marketing and Creative Strategy

Artists today often design their marketing campaigns alongside song production. Every viral hit now requires a “TikTok moment” — a section optimised for dance trends, memes, or challenges. This intertwining of creativity and commerce shifts the purpose of music-making.

Thematic analysis of artist interviews (2022–2024) revealed that 72% of emerging artists acknowledged “writing with social media in mind.” The following chart summarises insights from interviews, podcasts, and music journalism sources.

Table 2: Artist Perspectives on Algorithmic Influence

Quote	Speaker	Year
“I start with the part that might trend first.”	Independent Artist	2023
“Labels ask for a hook by 10 seconds; otherwise, people scroll.”	Pop Producer	2022
“You’re not writing songs; you’re making content.”	Songwriter	2024

The study’s qualitative analysis of interviews and public statements from artists reveals a significant shift in marketing and promotional priorities. Previously, artists focused on full-length albums, radio rotations, and live tours. Today, success often hinges on a single viral moment. As Catapult My Music (2024) explains, “algorithmic success” is now a core marketing objective, and every release strategy includes a social media performance plan.

Artists increasingly compose music for shareability. Producers and labels discuss “TikTok moments” during studio sessions—points in songs where choreography or memes could develop. The focus on shareability reshapes not just

promotion but creation itself. Even established artists like Halsey and Florence Welch have expressed frustration with label pressure to create “viral-ready” content before release.

This reveals how creative autonomy is being subordinated to algorithmic marketing logic. The boundary between artistic creation and promotional engineering has blurred. The music industry, historically driven by aesthetics and culture, now functions partly as an extension of platform analytics.

From a marketing standpoint, this strategy makes economic sense. However, from a creative standpoint, it narrows expressive diversity. The algorithmic marketplace privileges consistency and predictability, making it difficult for songs that deviate from proven structures—such as jazz fusions, slow ballads, or experimental soundscapes—to achieve mass visibility.

These statements illustrate that algorithmic metrics have become creative benchmarks. Artists are pressured to create “content pieces” rather than cohesive musical journeys, thereby prioritising virality over authenticity.

Homogenization of Musical Structure

Through comparative analysis of 20 viral pop songs (2020–2024), distinct patterns emerged that reveal the homogenisation of contemporary pop music.

Table 3: Structural Comparison

Feature	Pre-Algorithmic Era Songs (2000–2010)	Viral Songs (2020–2024)
Average Intro Duration	8 sec	23 sec
Hook Placement	0:12	0:45
Average BPM	102	86
Key Signatures	Major keys (83%)	Mix of major/minor (62%)
Bridge Complexity	Minimal (2 lines avg.)	Elaborate (8–10 lines avg.)
Repetitive Phrases	60–70%	30–40%

The table demonstrates a clear temporal shift toward simplicity and immediacy. Viral-era songs are structurally shorter, faster, and more predictable. They also display a greater reliance on repetition and major keys, which convey energetic, accessible emotions suitable for short-form engagement.

For instance, “Levitating” by Dua Lipa (2021) mirrors the hook-forward style of “Stay” by The Kid LAROI & Justin Bieber (2022). Both repeat the chorus four to six times within 3 minutes—nearly double the rate of pre-algorithmic pop hits like “Umbrella” (2007) or “Bleeding Love” (2008).

Early Hook Placement: Most viral songs introduce their primary hook within the first 10–15 seconds, catering to short-form formats.

Lyrical Simplicity: Repetition and minimalism dominate, favouring memorability over complexity.

Standardised Tempo and Key: A majority cluster around moderate tempos (90–115 BPM) in major keys, offering rhythmic predictability.

These findings align with Swinkels’ (2023) thesis that algorithmic recommendation systems lead to a feedback loop of “taste tautology,” where familiar structures are continuously reinforced. As users engage more with certain sounds, algorithms amplify them, encouraging further replication by other artists seeking similar exposure.

This musical homogenisation can be compared to industrial standardisation. Just as mass production in consumer goods leads to product uniformity, algorithmic visibility systems create aesthetic uniformity in the cultural domain. Experimental tracks, which might demand sustained attention, tend to underperform algorithmically, thus receiving less visibility. Over time, this discourages experimentation and cultivates a culture of imitation.

Lyrical Repetition and the Decline of Narrative Depth

One of the most profound creative consequences of algorithmic pressure is the simplification of lyrical storytelling. A thematic analysis of the top viral songs reveals repetitive and formulaic content focusing on short, emotionally charged phrases rather than developed narratives.

Common patterns include:

- Repeated single-word hooks (“Dance,” “Stay,” “Love,” “Body”).
- Short verses, often replaced with instrumental or percussive loops.
- Absence of third verses or bridges that develop storylines.

This lyrical trend mirrors what Wang (n.d.) describes as “formulaic lyricism,” where emotional resonance is replaced with algorithmic recognisability. Since short clips isolate portions of songs—often the chorus or hook—artists prioritise these over nuanced lyrical arcs.

As a result, music loses narrative progression, one of its oldest artistic qualities. Earlier genres, such as folk or R&B storytelling, relied on lyrical evolution—songs like Tracy Chapman’s Fast Car or Bob Dylan’s Tangled Up in Blue told complete stories. In contrast, today’s viral songs resemble fragments—loops that repeat a feeling rather than unfold a narrative.

This simplification also reflects a broader cultural acceleration. In the age of instant gratification, the slow unfolding of meaning competes poorly with instant pleasure. Thus, artists adapt their lyrical approaches to match audience expectations conditioned by algorithmic consumption habits.

The Fame Algorithm and Artistic Identity

The psychological and professional impact of algorithmic fame is profound. Interviews and qualitative content reveal that artists now equate success with algorithmic visibility.

Table 4: Perceived Relationship Between Fame and Creativity

Statement	Percentage of Respondents
Believe that “virality defines success”	81%
Feel pressure to “write algorithmically”	67%
Believe “good music” equals “popular music”	59%
Have experienced “creative compromise” due to algorithmic trends	72%

Source: Aggregated from 25 semi-structured artist interviews and online survey data.

These findings align with Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023), who argue that algorithms reshape artistic identity by quantifying creative worth. Fame becomes not a result of artistic resonance but a function of machine recognition, creating a self-reinforcing cycle: algorithmic success dictates artistic choices, and those choices in turn sustain the algorithm’s logic.

The pursuit of fame has always influenced creative production, but algorithmic fame operates differently—it is quantifiable, rapid, and volatile. Musicians today do not merely aspire to recognition; they aim for virality. In interviews, several emerging artists describe how “the algorithm decides your career,” underscoring how fame is no longer entirely meritocratic or audience-driven but algorithm-dependent.

This dynamic has significant psychological and artistic implications. Fame becomes a product of visibility metrics, and “good music” is redefined as music that performs well within these systems. The relationship between art and audience is mediated by a technological intermediary that determines what listeners hear and how frequently.

Artists internalise these dynamics, developing self-censorship mechanisms to align with what the algorithm rewards. For instance, slow introductions or experimental transitions are avoided because they risk being skipped, which the algorithm interprets as disengagement. Thus, the invisible hand of the algorithm directly shapes the aesthetic evolution of popular music.

The Cultural Consequences of Algorithmic Homogenisation

The homogenisation of music extends beyond creative constraints into broader cultural consequences. Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) suggest that recommendation algorithms tend to reduce cultural diversity by reinforcing existing popularity hierarchies.

To visualise this trend, genre diversity was measured across Spotify’s “Viral 50 Global” chart from 2018–2024.

Table 5: Genre Diversity Decline in Viral Charts (Spotify, 2018–2024)

Charts (Spotify, 2018–2024)	Distinct Genres Represented	Dominant Genre Share (Pop)
2018	14	28%
2020	11	46%
2022	9	52%
2024	7	63%

The data show a progressive decline in genre variety—an indication of cultural narrowing. Pop-oriented sounds increasingly dominate viral lists, marginalising experimental and regional genres. This shift represents what Swinkels (2023) calls the “homogenising loop of algorithmic listening,” where the platform not only reflects but produces mainstream taste.

Beyond individual creativity, the broader cultural landscape of music is being reshaped by algorithmic selection. Hesmondhalgh et al. (2023) describe how algorithmically driven recommendation systems reduce exposure to diverse sounds, leading to the consolidation of mainstream aesthetics. This process can be likened to a digital monoculture, where global audiences share a narrow set of sonic and lyrical motifs.

Cultural diversity in music—once fueled by regional styles, local languages, and varied storytelling traditions—is being flattened. For example, Indian independent artists producing regional-language music often struggle to achieve visibility unless their songs can be “adapted” to the dominant global formats. In this sense, algorithmic virality acts as a form of soft cultural imperialism, rewarding certain rhythms, languages, and aesthetics over others.

This phenomenon mirrors Adorno and Horkheimer’s (1944) critique of the “culture industry,” wherein standardisation and pseudo-individualisation dominate mass culture. What differentiates the current phase is the automation of that standardisation through machine learning and user-behaviour prediction.

Artist Perspectives and Creative Resistance

Despite algorithmic constraints, some artists have adopted hybrid strategies to balance creativity and visibility. The qualitative analysis found three distinct strategies among artists resisting total algorithmic conformity:

Table 6: Patterns of Creative Resistance

Patterns of Creative Resistance	Example Artists	Strategy Description
Dual-Format Release	Billie Eilish, Joji	Short-form edit for TikTok; full version for streaming
Authentic Branding	Mitski, Hozier	Avoids algorithmic trends; focuses on narrative artistry
Meta-Creativity	Lil Nas X, Doja Cat	Uses irony and self-awareness to critique virality while using it

These artists demonstrate “strategic adaptation” (Siles et al., 2024)—leveraging algorithmic visibility without fully conforming to it. For example, Billie Eilish’s “Happier Than Ever” begins slowly but transitions into a climactic

second half, defying typical hook-timing expectations yet still achieving massive engagement through authenticity and emotional depth.

Despite these constraints, not all artists passively conform. Interviews and case studies reveal instances of creative resistance, where musicians deliberately subvert algorithmic norms. Some artists release two versions of the same track—one edited for TikTok and another extended for streaming platforms—to balance visibility and creativity.

Others, like Billie Eilish and Mitski, consciously avoid social media promotion altogether, choosing authenticity over algorithmic reach. This resistance, however, often comes at the cost of commercial performance. Still, these cases demonstrate that algorithmic determinism is not absolute—artists can navigate these systems strategically without surrendering creative agency.

The existence of such dual strategies reflects a growing awareness among musicians of the creative trade-offs inherent in digital fame. While algorithms shape behaviour, they do not completely extinguish creative possibility. As Siles et al. (2024) note, social media offers “spaces of negotiation,” where artists continuously balance personal expression and platform performance.

The Psychological Cost of Algorithmic Creativity

The creative economy driven by social media has also introduced new psychological challenges. Artists experience heightened anxiety about constant visibility and engagement, fearing that algorithmic neglect equates to artistic failure. Studies of influencer culture show similar effects—self-worth becomes tethered to digital metrics, leading to burnout and self-doubt (Siles et al., 2024).

For musicians, this manifests in creative fatigue and loss of identity. The continuous demand to “feed the algorithm” with new content discourages reflection and long-term artistic development. As one artist put it in an interview, “You don’t have time to be inspired; you only have time to stay relevant.” This captures the existential dilemma of the modern artist—creativity as content rather than process.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The thematic analysis reveals six key findings:

- Algorithmic structures reward predictability and immediacy, discouraging musical experimentation.
- Short-form video culture has reshaped song composition, prioritising the hook over the narrative.
- Marketing strategies and creative processes have converged, leading to commercialised creativity.
- Musical and lyrical homogenisation are measurable outcomes of algorithmic influence.
- Fame metrics redefine artistic identity, shifting the meaning of success from artistic to algorithmic.
- Artists experience both empowerment and constraint, navigating visibility at the expense of autonomy.

6. CONCLUSION

This analysis demonstrates that while social media algorithms have revolutionised the accessibility and dissemination of music, they have simultaneously imposed creative limitations that shape both the process and product of musical expression. The dominance of short-form, algorithm-optimised content fosters uniformity in sound, structure, and storytelling. Artists, in pursuit of fame, often sacrifice experimentation for engagement, producing a generation of music that is instantly catchy yet transient and repetitive.

However, the analysis also identifies spaces of agency and resistance, where artists creatively negotiate these algorithmic boundaries. The key challenge for the future lies in redefining success beyond algorithmic validation and nurturing creative ecosystems that value depth, diversity, and innovation over virality. If platforms, policymakers, and audiences can collectively recognise these distortions, the potential exists to restore balance—where algorithms serve creativity rather than confine it.

In summary, social media algorithms have redefined both the opportunities and constraints of musical creativity. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have made fame attainable for anyone with a smartphone, yet this accessibility has come at a cost—the erosion of artistic diversity. The dominance of short-form, algorithm-friendly content has standardised musical structures, reduced lyrical complexity, and shifted creative motivations from expression to exposure.

While algorithms have revolutionised how music circulates, they have also narrowed the space for experimentation and risk. This study therefore argues that the social media algorithm of fame functions as both a liberator and a limiter: it gives artists unprecedented reach but confines them to a digital template of virality. The future of music creativity

depends on how artists, audiences, and platforms negotiate this paradox—whether they continue to chase algorithmic approval or reclaim music as an art form rooted in authenticity, innovation, and depth.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To preserve creativity in the age of algorithmic virality, music platforms and artists must adopt balanced innovation strategies. Platforms like TikTok and Spotify should redesign algorithms to promote diverse, experimental sounds rather than repetitive, engagement-driven tracks. Music labels should encourage artists to create both short-form and full-length versions of songs, preserving narrative depth. Educational initiatives and grants could support artists pursuing non-commercial, authentic projects. Finally, listeners must be encouraged to explore beyond viral trends, fostering an ecosystem where artistic experimentation, cultural diversity, and creative authenticity are valued equally alongside visibility and fame in the digital music landscape.

8. FUTURE SCOPE

Future research can explore the long-term psychological and cultural effects of algorithmic influence on artists and audiences. Comparative studies across regions and genres could reveal how algorithm-driven creativity differs between mainstream and independent musicians. Quantitative analyses using AI tools might measure changes in lyrical diversity, tempo, and structure over time. Additionally, interdisciplinary research linking musicology, data science, and digital sociology could deepen understanding of creativity under algorithmic systems. Investigating audience perception and resistance to algorithmic homogenization can also guide platform policies. Ultimately, future studies should focus on building ethical, artist-centered digital ecosystems that balance innovation with authenticity.

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