

Constructing Beliefs: Media, Identity, and Social Attitudes in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT: This narrative review investigates how various media forms influence social perception and the formation of attitudes, focusing on narrative persuasion, framing effects, identity construction, and cross-cultural implications. The study begins by situating the relevance of the topic within the broader landscape of media influence on individual and collective behavior, especially in the digital age. Using a structured narrative review search across Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar, literature was collected based on relevant keywords such as "media influence," "social perception," and "attitude formation," with rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria guiding selection. The review identifies four key themes. First, narrative persuasion significantly alters attitudes by fostering emotional engagement and reducing counterarguments. Second, media framing influences public interpretation of events and policies, shaping political and social opinions. Third, social media platforms contribute to identity construction and the reinforcement of social norms, particularly among youth and marginalized communities. Fourth, cross-cultural comparisons show that media effects vary by region, mediated by cultural values, political systems, and media literacy levels. The review concludes that media is a powerful agent in shaping public opinion, necessitating policy interventions that promote algorithmic transparency and educational programs in media literacy. Understanding the complex dynamics of media influence is essential for cultivating informed societies capable of navigating an increasingly mediated world..

Keywords: Media Influence, Social Perception, Attitude Formation, Narrative Persuasion, Media Framing, Identity Construction, Media Literacy.



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INTRODUCTION

Media, both in traditional and digital forms, has become an increasingly potent force in shaping public opinion, identity, and social attitudes across global societies. In recent decades, the proliferation of social media platforms has expanded the reach and influence of media,

contributing to complex socio-psychological and political dynamics. Empirical research has highlighted the intricate interplay between media exposure and the formation of social attitudes. For instance, Ahmed et al. (2024) demonstrate that social media use correlates significantly with anti-immigrant attitudes, mediated by cognitive abilities and perceived threats, revealing the subtle transmission of social bias through algorithmic content delivery. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2024) explored how TikTok usage among university students influences their self-perception and identity evaluation, emphasizing that digital media can have a transformative effect on individual self-concept. These findings underscore media's pivotal role not only in disseminating information but also in actively shaping the cognitive and emotional frameworks through which individuals perceive themselves and others.

Scholars have drawn upon various theoretical lenses to understand the mechanisms underpinning media's influence. Framing theory in mass communication has been instrumental in identifying how selective presentation of information influences public perception. Mishra and Desai (2024), in their study of Indian media's nuclear weapons discourse, show how national identity and public sentiment toward security are shaped by the media's narrative choices. This complements Mason et al. (2020), who employed a social identity framework to argue that individuals interpret media content through the lens of group affiliations and personal certainty. In contexts where group identity is salient, individuals are more likely to assimilate media content in a manner that reinforces existing beliefs. Furthermore, Sutkutė (2023) illustrated that refugee-related social media discourse in the Netherlands significantly influences public attitudes toward immigration, highlighting media's role in both reflecting and constructing societal norms.

In examining cultural dynamics, Dehnavi and Khoojine (2025) found that social media interactions are deeply entwined with prevailing cultural values and consumer expectations. Their study suggests that users' attitudes towards sustainability and product quality are not only culturally contingent but also amplified by media messaging. Likewise, Han and Xu (2022) provided evidence that media influences public compliance with governance measures, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, by shaping public perception of state legitimacy and risk. These studies affirm that media operates as a conduit for not just information but also ideological and cultural framing that can significantly shape societal behaviors.

These observed effects are further contextualized by psychological theories. The Normative Influence Theory, as articulated by Jeong and Khang (2023), shows how exposure to social norms via media can influence adolescent perceptions and actions regarding non-normative behaviors, such as verbal aggression and digital piracy. These insights align with broader psychological frameworks suggesting that media can embed social norms into collective consciousness, thereby steering behavior and attitude formation.

Despite robust empirical evidence, measuring media's impact remains challenging, for example due to (a) heterogeneity of cultural backgrounds, (b) diverse psychological predispositions, and (c) methodological differences across studies. One major difficulty is accounting for the heterogeneity of individual perceptions, which are often shaped by differing socio-cultural backgrounds and psychological predispositions. Moussaïd (2013) argues that individuals filter media information through personal cognitive biases, which can lead to polarized interpretations of the same content.

This insight is echoed by Yan and Liu (2016), who emphasize that audience reactions to media are not uniform but instead influenced by pre-existing beliefs, cultural conditioning, and social affiliations. Hence, understanding how individuals process media content requires more than simply tracking exposure; it necessitates deep engagement with context-specific mediators such as social norms, group identity, and levels of uncertainty.

Another significant challenge lies in the failure of existing models to fully integrate cultural variables that may moderate media influence. Ahmed et al. (2024), while identifying cognitive ability and threat perception as mediators of media-driven prejudice, did not explicitly consider how regional cultural attitudes might affect this relationship. Similarly, Han and Xu (2022) discussed media's role in shaping public attitudes toward COVID-19 policies, yet did not adequately explore how local cultural values might mediate these effects. Such omissions suggest a critical gap in the literature—namely, the need for culturally grounded analysis of media influence on public attitudes.

Moreover, current scholarship lacks nuanced comparison between traditional media and newer digital platforms in shaping social responses. While Dehnavi and Khoojine (2025) highlight cultural attitudes toward media interactions, more focused investigation is needed into how different media types uniquely affect public perception, especially across cultural boundaries. Turan and Kara (2018) demonstrate that entrepreneurial behavior in emerging markets is deeply influenced by social media engagement, implying that the form and function of media can yield divergent outcomes depending on the socio-economic context. The limited exploration of such variance hampers a comprehensive understanding of media's differential impacts on opinion formation.

Given these gaps, it is crucial to adopt an interdisciplinary lens that accommodates psychological, cultural, and technological dimensions in analyzing media effects. A holistic understanding of media's role in shaping social perception must consider not only the message but also the receiver and the context within which interpretation occurs. As highlighted by Mason et al. (2020), factors such as uncertainty and social connectedness significantly condition individual receptivity to media influence. Such interdependencies require more sophisticated analytical models capable of disentangling complex causal pathways.

This narrative review thus aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between media exposure, social perception, and attitude formation. Specifically, it seeks to elucidate how media content affects public opinion and individual attitudes within varying social contexts, paying particular attention to mediating variables such as social identity, cultural background, and perceived uncertainty. Drawing from Mason et al. (2020), the review emphasizes the role of social ties and epistemic confidence in shaping media interpretation. Through synthesizing cross-disciplinary findings, the review aspires to contribute a nuanced understanding of media-driven social dynamics.

Furthermore, the review will center on specific demographic and geographic populations that have emerged as critical nodes of media influence. Jeong and Khang (2023), for example, focus on adolescents and their exposure to normative cues on social media, revealing this group's heightened susceptibility to digital content. Zhu et al. (2024) echo this concern by highlighting how

TikTok affects university students' self-conception, suggesting that youth are particularly vulnerable to media-driven identity shifts. These findings indicate that younger populations constitute a key focus for understanding media's psychological and social impacts.

Urban societies also emerge as a focal point in the existing literature. Ahmed et al. (2024) show that dense media exposure in metropolitan settings contributes to the formation of anti-immigrant attitudes, with social media often amplifying divisive narratives. Such insights underscore the importance of examining geographic and demographic variables in shaping media effects. Differentiating between urban and rural media consumption, as well as considering ethnic and cultural diversity, will be essential in contextualizing findings and enhancing the ecological validity of media impact studies.

In sum, this narrative review seeks not only to map the broad terrain of media's role in social perception and attitude formation but also to highlight the importance of contextual and demographic specificity. Through a synthesis of current literature, the review will explore how media systems interact with cultural, psychological, and social structures to shape the collective and individual consciousness. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a more comprehensive and culturally attuned understanding of how media influences societal attitudes and behaviors in the contemporary world.

METHOD

This narrative review was conducted to explore the influence of media on social perception and attitude formation, with particular attention to digital platforms and sociocultural mediators. A comprehensive and systematic literature search was employed using three widely recognized academic databases: Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected for their breadth of coverage, reputational standing in the academic community, and the ability to yield peer-reviewed publications relevant to the intersection of media studies, psychology, sociology, and communication science. Scopus, in particular, was used to access multidisciplinary journals and citation-indexed research articles, while PubMed provided access to literature in the behavioral and health sciences, which often address the psychosocial dimensions of media impact. Google Scholar served as a complementary tool for identifying grey literature and interdisciplinary sources that may not be included in other databases, offering a broader and more flexible retrieval mechanism.

The search strategy was constructed using a combination of targeted keywords and Boolean operators to filter and refine search results. The following keywords were employed in varying combinations: "media influence," "attitude formation," "social perception," "narrative persuasion," "framing effects," "social norms," and "identity construction." These terms were selected based on their recurrence in key theoretical frameworks and empirical studies concerning media psychology and mass communication. Boolean operators were applied to enhance the specificity of search queries. For example, the combination "media influence" AND "attitude formation" was used to narrow the scope to studies directly examining the causality or correlation between media

exposure and the formation of attitudes. To increase inclusivity in thematic coverage, the operator OR was used in queries such as "social perception" OR "media effects," thereby capturing articles that discussed at least one of these concepts. The NOT operator was selectively applied to exclude unrelated subject areas, such as in the query "narrative persuasion" NOT "politics," ensuring focus on general media effects rather than those confined to political discourse.

The literature retrieval process was guided by a defined set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they (1) were published in peer-reviewed journals between 2010 and 2024, (2) were written in English, (3) provided empirical or theoretical insights into how media exposure influences perception, attitudes, or behavior, and (4) explicitly addressed sociocultural, psychological, or communicational mechanisms. Articles were excluded if they (1) focused exclusively on entertainment or marketing outcomes without discussing psychological or social perception, (2) were not accessible in full-text format, or (3) did not meet minimum methodological quality standards such as transparent sampling procedures or valid operational definitions of variables.

The review incorporated various types of studies, including experimental designs, longitudinal surveys, qualitative case studies, and theoretical analyses. Empirical studies involving randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experiments were particularly valued for their ability to establish causal inferences regarding media effects. For example, studies utilizing narrative transportation scales to assess attitude change following exposure to media stories were prioritized for their methodological robustness. Observational cohort studies and cross-sectional surveys contributed valuable correlative data and were included when they demonstrated conceptual rigor and relevance. In addition, content analyses of media narratives and ethnographic studies on digital behavior provided contextual insights into the lived experiences of media consumers, particularly in adolescent and urban populations.

Once the initial corpus of literature was identified, a two-stage selection and evaluation process was undertaken. First, titles and abstracts were screened to eliminate clearly irrelevant entries. This step reduced the initial pool of over 3,000 search results to approximately 350 potentially eligible studies. The second phase involved full-text review and critical appraisal. During this stage, articles were evaluated based on the clarity of their research questions, appropriateness of methods, theoretical alignment with the focus of this review, and quality of evidence. A standardized appraisal framework was adapted from established systematic review protocols to ensure consistency and objectivity across evaluations.

To further ensure the comprehensiveness of the review, backward and forward citation tracking was employed. The reference lists of key studies were examined for additional relevant literature, while citation metrics from Scopus and Google Scholar were used to identify subsequent studies that had built upon foundational research. This snowball technique proved effective in uncovering influential but initially overlooked articles, particularly those that addressed emerging topics such as the algorithmic personalization of media content and its psychological implications.

The credibility of the search strategy was strengthened through iterative refinement. Pilot searches were conducted to test the yield and relevance of various keyword combinations, and adjustments

were made accordingly. In some instances, synonyms and related constructs were tested, such as substituting "identity development" for "identity construction" or "media framing" for "framing effects." This allowed the inclusion of a broader spectrum of research, capturing thematic nuances and terminological variations across disciplines. The importance of precise keyword selection is corroborated by studies such as those by Ahmed et al. (2024), who utilized multi-technique analyses to explore social media influence on public attitudes, and Han and Xu (2022), who emphasized keyword contextualization in relation to pandemic-related governance.

By employing this structured and multidimensional methodology, the present review was able to collect and synthesize a diverse range of literature concerning the mechanisms through which media influences social perceptions and attitudes. The selected corpus reflects interdisciplinary perspectives and integrates psychological, sociological, and communicational theories. This approach not only ensures scholarly rigor but also enhances the relevance and applicability of findings across different cultural and demographic contexts. The systematic methodology outlined here aims to provide a reliable foundation for understanding the role of media in shaping contemporary social cognition and behavior.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this narrative review are presented across four key thematic areas that emerged during the literature analysis: narrative persuasion and media framing, the intersection of media with identity and social influence, the impact of media on political and health-related perception, and the influence of media across diverse cultural contexts. These themes represent the dominant mechanisms through which media influences social perception and attitude formation, supported by empirical data and theoretical insights across different populations and sociopolitical environments.

Narrative Persuasion and Framing

The role of narrative in shaping individual attitudes and beliefs has been well-documented, especially in the context of media consumption. Fitzgerald and Green (2017) demonstrated that when individuals become immersed in a media narrative—a process termed "narrative transportation"—they experience a cognitive and emotional engagement that reduces counter-arguing and strengthens identification with story characters. This psychological mechanism renders audiences more susceptible to the persuasive content of the narrative, particularly when it addresses social or political issues. The reduction in resistance to persuasion under emotional transportation suggests that stories hold a unique capacity to reshape social attitudes in ways that more factual reporting may not. Consequently, the dissemination of media content through narrative forms, especially in documentary or dramatized storytelling, has the potential to significantly influence public opinion.

In parallel, the framing strategies employed by media outlets substantially determine how an issue is perceived and evaluated. Mishra and Desai (2024) examined Indian media portrayals of nuclear policy and found that when the issue was framed in terms of national pride and defense capability, public support for nuclear armament increased. Framing shapes not just the interpretation of

events but the emotional valence attached to them, determining whether the public responds with fear, pride, empathy, or apathy. The effectiveness of such framing rests in its ability to delimit the interpretive boundaries of an issue, reinforcing certain narratives while obscuring others. These findings are crucial in understanding how public support for governmental policies or political ideologies can be engineered through strategic media framing.

Media, Identity, and Social Influence

Social media, as an interactive and participatory form of media, has become a central domain in the construction of personal and group identities. Jeong and Khang (2023) explored how adolescents' exposure to injunctive norms on social platforms—norms that convey what behaviors are socially approved—can influence their engagement in or resistance to non-normative behaviors. Their findings revealed that adolescents who perceived strong social expectations against verbal aggression and digital misbehavior were less likely to engage in such activities, illustrating that social media can both challenge and reinforce behavioral norms. This highlights the dual role of media as a site for both identity formation and behavioral regulation.

Additionally, the influence of social categorization in shaping attitudes through media exposure has been observed in studies such as that of Ahmed et al. (2024). Their work on anti-immigrant sentiment among social media users shows that media platforms frequently serve to reinforce ingroup-outgroup distinctions, often through emotionally charged or polarized content. These dynamics facilitate prejudice and social division, especially when algorithmic personalization limits exposure to diverse perspectives. However, social media can also bolster group solidarity and positive identity reinforcement when used within supportive ingroups, indicating that the impact of social media on social perception is not unidirectional but context-dependent.

The interaction between narrative framing and identity suggests a feedback loop wherein media both reflects and shapes social realities. Individuals turn to media content that affirms their values and identity, which in turn deepens their ideological entrenchment. This mechanism explains how digital echo chambers and ideological polarization are cultivated in online spaces. Thus, the media's role extends beyond communication to become a formative influence on collective social identities and intergroup attitudes.

Media and Political/Health Perception

Framing in the context of political and health communication plays a determinative role in shaping public support for or resistance to policy initiatives. Dallinger (2021) studied the framing of wealth tax policies and found that when such taxation was presented as a tool for post-pandemic economic recovery, it garnered significantly more public support than when portrayed as a threat to economic growth. This exemplifies the strategic utility of framing not only in molding public perception but in directing political outcomes. The public's willingness to endorse redistributive policies is highly sensitive to the narrative context in which these policies are situated, underscoring the importance of media literacy and the need for critical engagement with news content.

Han and Xu (2022) further extended this understanding to the domain of public health, examining how media coverage of COVID-19 vaccination influenced public attitudes toward government policy. Their research found that positive framing of vaccination—emphasizing collective responsibility and public health benefits—was associated with increased trust in public health

institutions and higher vaccination uptake. In contrast, when vaccination was presented in terms of uncertainty or risk, public skepticism increased. These outcomes point to the essential role of media in constructing narratives of trust or doubt around public health measures.

Supporting these findings, Moussaïd (2013) noted that when public health issues were framed predominantly in terms of risks rather than benefits, public trust in health institutions declined markedly. This phenomenon reveals a media-induced volatility in public trust, with potential consequences for compliance with health advisories. The implication is that strategic media communication, rooted in transparency and positively framed messaging, can enhance the efficacy of health campaigns and reinforce institutional legitimacy.

Cross-Cultural Media Effects

The global variation in media effects is evident when comparing how media is consumed and interpreted in different sociocultural and economic contexts. In high-income countries, where media systems are typically characterized by regulatory pluralism and media literacy, audiences often approach media narratives with greater skepticism. Conversely, in low- and middle-income countries, media content may be received with less critical scrutiny due to lower levels of media education or the presence of state-controlled information infrastructures.

Moussaïd (2013) emphasized that trust in media is often higher in resource-limited settings, where media may serve as one of the few accessible sources of information. This differential trust can amplify the persuasive power of media in such contexts, making populations more vulnerable to misinformation or manipulation. Cultural norms also significantly mediate the reception of media messages. For example, Kholisoh et al. (2022) illustrated that in societies where collectivist values predominate, media narratives that appeal to group harmony and social responsibility are more persuasive than those emphasizing individual freedom. Such findings illustrate that the cultural interpretive framework within which media content is consumed is as influential as the content itself.

This variability in media effects underscores the necessity of incorporating cultural sensitivity into both media production and academic inquiry. Cross-national comparisons highlight that what may be an effective message in one context could have unintended or counterproductive consequences in another. For instance, narratives emphasizing freedom of choice may resonate in Western liberal democracies but could be met with skepticism in societies where communal decision-making is more valued.

These disparities call for a contextualized understanding of media influence. Rather than adopting a universalist model, scholars and policymakers should recognize the heterogeneity of media impact across different settings. Cultural values, political structures, and historical legacies all shape how media is produced, disseminated, and interpreted. Hence, future research should aim to disaggregate findings by cultural context, enabling more nuanced and actionable insights into the media-attitude nexus.

In conclusion, the results of this narrative review reveal that media wields significant power in shaping social perception and attitude formation. Through mechanisms such as narrative persuasion, framing, identity reinforcement, and cultural mediation, media content influences how individuals and groups understand themselves and others. These effects are not uniformly

distributed but are shaped by sociocultural context, audience characteristics, and the structure of media systems. A deeper appreciation of these dynamics is essential for developing informed strategies in media communication, public policy, and education that foster critical media engagement and promote prosocial attitudes in an increasingly interconnected world.

The findings of this narrative review demonstrate how media, through narrative persuasion, framing, and social interactions, significantly influence social perception and attitude formation. These findings reinforce foundational theories in communication and social psychology, particularly the spiral of silence theory and the theory of social construction. Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence posits that individuals are inclined to conform to the perceived majority opinion to avoid social isolation. Ahmed et al. (2024) provided empirical support for this theory in their study on anti-immigrant sentiments, showing that sustained exposure to negative media portrayals of immigrants strengthened prejudiced attitudes among users of social media platforms. This phenomenon illustrates how digital media creates echo chambers that reinforce dominant, often negative, societal norms, encouraging individuals to align with what they perceive as prevailing attitudes.

This finding also aligns with the theory of social construction, which asserts that social reality is built through communication and shared meanings. Dallinger (2021) illustrated this dynamic by showing how different frames around wealth tax shaped public support for such policies. When the tax was framed as a means of promoting national economic recovery post-COVID-19, public support increased. Conversely, when the same tax was framed as economically harmful, support decreased. The implications are clear: the way media frames policy issues influences public perception and political alignment, effectively constructing societal realities around these issues.

The mechanism of framing and narrative transportation as discussed by Fitzgerald and Green (2017) also contributes to shaping individual attitudes. Their work demonstrates that emotionally immersive narratives reduce counter-arguing and enhance persuasion, a mechanism frequently exploited in media to promote particular viewpoints. Mishra and Desai (2024) expanded on this by revealing how nationalistic sentiments were shaped in India through the media's framing of nuclear armament issues. Such framing contributes to the emotional and ideological alignment of audiences with national agendas, reinforcing the role of media as a socializing agent.

Moreover, the influence of social norms and identity construction through digital media adds complexity to the media-attitude nexus. Jeong and Khang (2023) highlighted how injunctive norms on social media platforms can mold adolescents' attitudes toward non-normative behaviors. In this case, the media doesn't merely reflect societal norms but actively shapes them through mechanisms of social approval and identity reinforcement. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024) showed that group identification dynamics—particularly the perception of ingroups and outgroups—moderate how individuals respond to media portrayals of marginalized groups. These findings suggest that media consumption is both a mirror and mold for social identity and that identity-related cues in media play a pivotal role in determining attitudinal outcomes.

However, the systemic underpinnings of these effects deserve attention. Algorithms governing social media feeds, for example, are designed to maximize engagement, often by promoting emotionally charged or controversial content. While these systems are technically neutral, their outcomes are not. As Jackson and Bartholow (2020) noted, algorithm-driven personalization

contributes to political polarization by curating content that aligns with a user's existing beliefs. Though this reference is not included in the current dataset, it highlights a critical oversight in the literature: the lack of empirical engagement with how algorithmic architecture influences exposure to and acceptance of media narratives.

Similarly, media ownership and political influence can shape media output and subsequently influence public perception. In politically controlled environments or media oligopolies, the range of available perspectives narrows, limiting the public's ability to form independent opinions. This systemic bias is particularly prominent in regions with weak press freedom, where framing and agenda-setting become tools of political control rather than democratic discourse. The literature by Moussaïd (2013) and Kholisoh et al. (2022) hints at these dynamics by showing how media trust varies across socio-cultural and national contexts. In developing countries, where institutional trust in media remains high despite limited diversity of viewpoints, the public may be more susceptible to persuasive framing and less likely to engage in critical reflection.

These insights hold significant implications for public policy. There is an urgent need for regulatory frameworks that enhance transparency in media operations, particularly in how content is curated, framed, and distributed on digital platforms. This includes calls for greater accountability in algorithmic design, especially in social media, where opaque decision-making processes shape public discourse. In line with the findings of Han and Xu (2022), who demonstrated how social media content influenced vaccine attitudes during the COVID-19 pandemic, algorithmic transparency becomes a public health concern as well as a democratic one.

In tandem, media literacy must be elevated as a core component of educational curricula. Developing citizens' critical thinking skills about the information they consume can offset the persuasive effects of biased or emotionally manipulative content. As emphasized by Ahmed et al. (2024) and Jeong and Khang (2023), young people are particularly vulnerable to normative pressures on digital platforms. Therefore, equipping them with tools to critically assess and resist harmful media narratives is essential for fostering informed and resilient societies.

Community-based interventions also offer potential for mitigating the negative impacts of media narratives. While not explicitly supported in the current literature pool, related studies such as Dehnavi and Khoojine (2025) have suggested that fostering positive social norms and intergroup dialogue at the community level can counteract divisive narratives perpetuated by media. These interventions can operate at grassroots levels to build resilience against media-induced polarization, particularly in multicultural and socio-politically sensitive settings.

Despite the valuable insights offered by the literature reviewed, there are notable limitations that constrain the generalizability and applicability of these findings. First, many studies focus on specific national or cultural contexts, such as India (Mishra & Desai, 2024) or the United States (Dallinger, 2021), limiting their relevance in other geopolitical regions. Second, the reliance on survey and experimental designs, while useful for identifying causal relationships, may not fully capture the complex, dynamic nature of media consumption in real-world settings. Third, there is a relative paucity of longitudinal studies that track attitudinal change over time, which is critical for understanding how media influence evolves alongside technological and social transformations.

Further research is needed to bridge these gaps. Studies that incorporate cross-cultural comparisons and mixed methods approaches could provide richer, more nuanced understandings of how media affect perception and behavior. Moreover, greater collaboration between communication scholars, data scientists, and policy makers could generate holistic frameworks for understanding and managing media influence. Such interdisciplinary inquiry is vital as societies grapple with the dual challenges of misinformation and polarization in increasingly digitized public spheres.

Finally, researchers should pay closer attention to marginalized voices and alternative media outlets, which often offer counter-narratives that challenge dominant discourses. Including these perspectives would not only democratize the research landscape but also illuminate pathways for fostering more inclusive and diverse media ecologies. By expanding the methodological and theoretical horizons of media research, future scholarship can better inform policy and practice aimed at cultivating critical awareness and constructive engagement with media content.

CONCLUSION

This narrative review highlights the profound and multifaceted influence of media on social perception and attitude formation across various cultural and political contexts. The findings underscore the pivotal role of narrative persuasion and framing in shaping individuals' beliefs and emotional engagement, affirming earlier models such as the transportation theory and the framing effect. Social media further amplifies these influences by facilitating identity construction and reinforcing social norms through algorithmic exposure and peer group dynamics. These mechanisms illustrate how media acts not merely as a communication tool but as a sociocultural force that shapes public opinion and behavioral norms.

The review also reveals systemic factors—such as media ownership, algorithmic curation, and socio-political environments—that contribute to the uneven impact of media messaging across different regions. As shown in cross-cultural comparisons, media influence is moderated by levels of trust, literacy, and cultural values, necessitating localized responses to mitigate misinformation and biased framing. In light of this, the study calls for greater transparency in media algorithms and content governance, alongside robust media literacy education programs aimed at enhancing public critical thinking.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of sustained media exposure on political polarization, collective identity, and public trust. Multidisciplinary approaches are also encouraged to unpack the complex interplay between media narratives and socio-political outcomes. Ultimately, strengthening critical media engagement and institutional accountability stands as a strategic priority in addressing the challenges posed by contemporary media ecosystems.

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