The YT algorithm

Some ideas to integrate in the website

From ['Fiction is outperforming reality': how YouTube's algorithm distorts truth | Technology | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/feb/02/how-youtubes-algorithm-distorts-truth)

**‘**[There are **1.5 billion YouTube users**](https://youtube.googleblog.com/2017/06/updates-from-vidcon-more-users-more.html#gpluscomments)**in the world**, which is more than the number of households that own televisions. What they watch is shaped by this algorithm, which skims and ranks billions of videos to identify 20 “up next” clips that are both relevant to a previous video and most likely, statistically speaking, to keep a person hooked on their screen.

Company insiders tell me the algorithm is **the single most important engine of YouTube’s growth**. In one of the few public explanations of how the formula works – [an academic paper](https://static.googleusercontent.com/media/research.google.com/en/pubs/archive/45530.pdf) that sketches the algorithm’s deep neural networks, crunching a vast pool of data about videos and the people who watch them – YouTube engineers describe it as one of the “largest scale and most sophisticated industrial recommendation systems in existence”.’

Problems of the algorithm

‘The algorithm does not appear to be optimising for what is truthful, or balanced, or healthy for democracy’ -Guillaume Chaslot, an ex-Google engineer

Lately, it has also become one of the most **controversial**. The algorithm has been found to be promoting [**conspiracy theories**](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/oct/04/las-vegas-shooting-youtube-hoax-conspiracy-theories) about the Las Vegas mass shooting and incentivising, through recommendations, a thriving subculture that targets children with **disturbing content** such as cartoons in which [the British children’s character Peppa Pig eats her father or drinks bleach](https://medium.com/@jamesbridle/something-is-wrong-on-the-internet-c39c471271d2).

As a consequence, many YouTubers learn ‘to please the algorithm’ by producing the content that gets the most likes.

Limitations of our research

[Chaslot explains that] the algorithm never stays the same. It is constantly changing the weight it gives to different signals: the viewing patterns of a user, for example, or the length of time a video is watched before someone clicks away.

* We cannot therefore aim to debunk the algorithm but rather gain insights from how it works