

Background: The story began in 2006 with Facebook, when they created their first recognizable newsfeed algorithm that allows users to posts made by their friends and liked pages. However, Facebook realized that this was not the best way of doing things, as users complained of having to weed out all the irrelevant posts to find the things they actually cared about. Facebook has changed their algorithm several times to make the newsfeed more relevant to users with some success. Like any other enterprise, social media sites want to increase revenue. Advertisement companies and social media outlets work in a seemingly mutualistic relationship: social media gets people to see ads, and ads pay social media sites for doing so.

Pros of Social Media Algorithms

Time & Interests:

- enormous amount of posts each minute across all platforms (including pictures, videos, and articles)
- There is NOT enough time to sort through all of that content and find what you want?
- No one would want to engage (like, repost, comment etc.) after all of that sorting!
- You would be missing out on things you would be interested in because you didn't know to search for it.

Facts about Social Media Algorithms: They are:

- Designed to improve your experience
- Informed by your choices & interests screen time, likes, reposts, opening links, etc.
- Dynamic - morphing based on YOUR response to suggestions
- Changing constantly to fix the kinks and respond to the feedback of users
- Pushing companies to create unique content that is fun, interesting & engaging for you to enjoy
- Different for each platform you use - means you are still exposed to a huge amount of unique content
- Working hard to get rid of "FAKE News," and keep out "transaction only" posts

Content is not blocked!

- Algorithms control the order the posts are displayed but all of the content is still there (just scroll down)
- The people you follow, your friends, and your preferences also add variety to your feed.
- Yes, you see posts that are consistent with your views first, but you can still search through ALL content
- With algorithms you will actually know what to search for!

Cons of Social Media Algorithms

A filter Bubble: is a term coined by Internet activist Eli Pariser to refer to a state of intellectual isolation. Users become isolated in their own ideological bubbles as they become separated from information that disagrees with their viewpoints.

Confirmation Bias and Circulation of Fake news: people become more secure in our bubbles and tend easily to believe in biased and misinformation. In 2015, before the months of the US election, fake news stories outperformed real news. For example, one story reported that Pope Francis endorsed Trump and was shared million times on social media feeds.

Filter Bubble Algorithm Threatens Democracy: democracy needs informed voters, and social media is supposed to expand people's horizons to the world around them. However, the algorithm used has made people less informed and enclosed in their own bubbles. For example, the results of the Brexit referendum (EU), 52% Leave and 48% Remain shows enormous turbulence was caused by the trending #IVotedLeave hashtag on the day of the referendum. Their message was also highly emotionally charged, which facilitated the viral spread of Leave ideas.

"Democracy requires citizens to see things from one another's point of view, but instead we're more and more enclosed in our own bubbles. Democracy requires a reliance on shared facts; instead, we're being offered parallel but separate universes." Eli Pariser, **The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding From You**

Additional Resources for more information on the Pros & Cons to this Argument:

<https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-algorithms/>

[How Do Social Media Algorithms Work? | Digital Marketing Institute](#)

<https://www.makeuseof.com/why-algorithmic-social-media-feeds-good/>

<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2017/02/08/code-dependent-pros-and-cons-of-the-algorithm-age/>

<https://www.onenought.one/post/algorithms-making-our-life-easier>