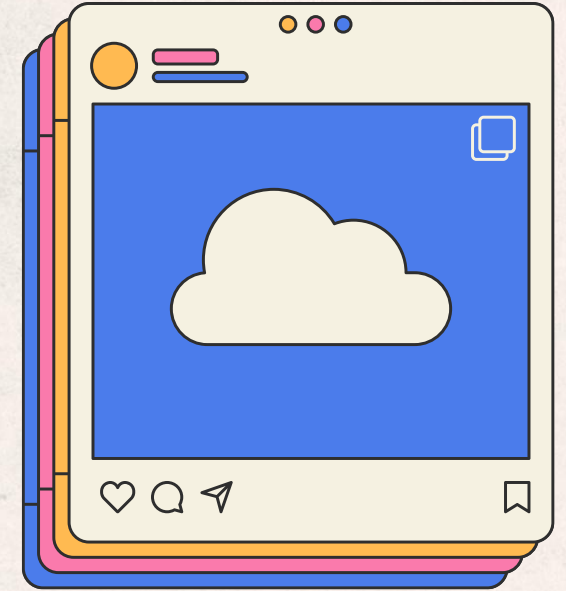
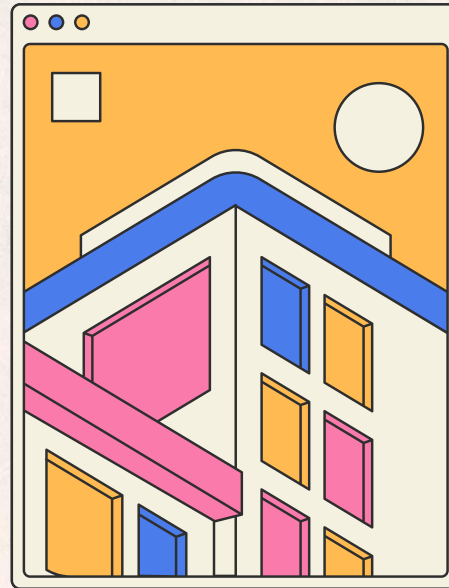
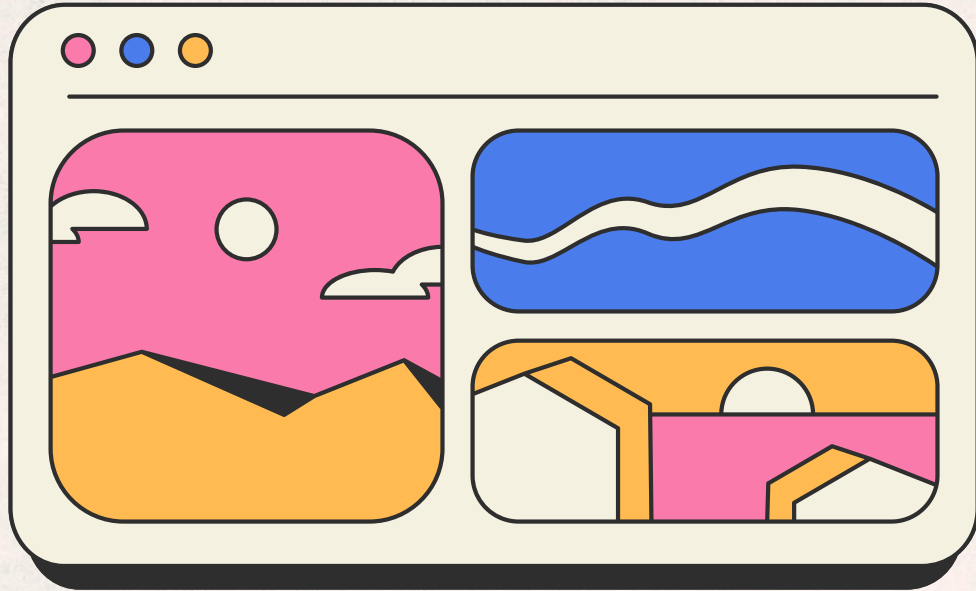
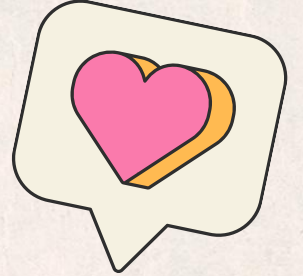
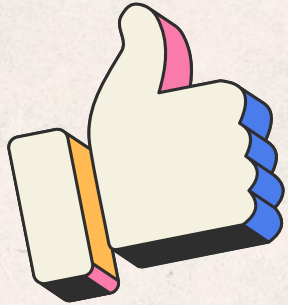


Technological Influences on Engagement

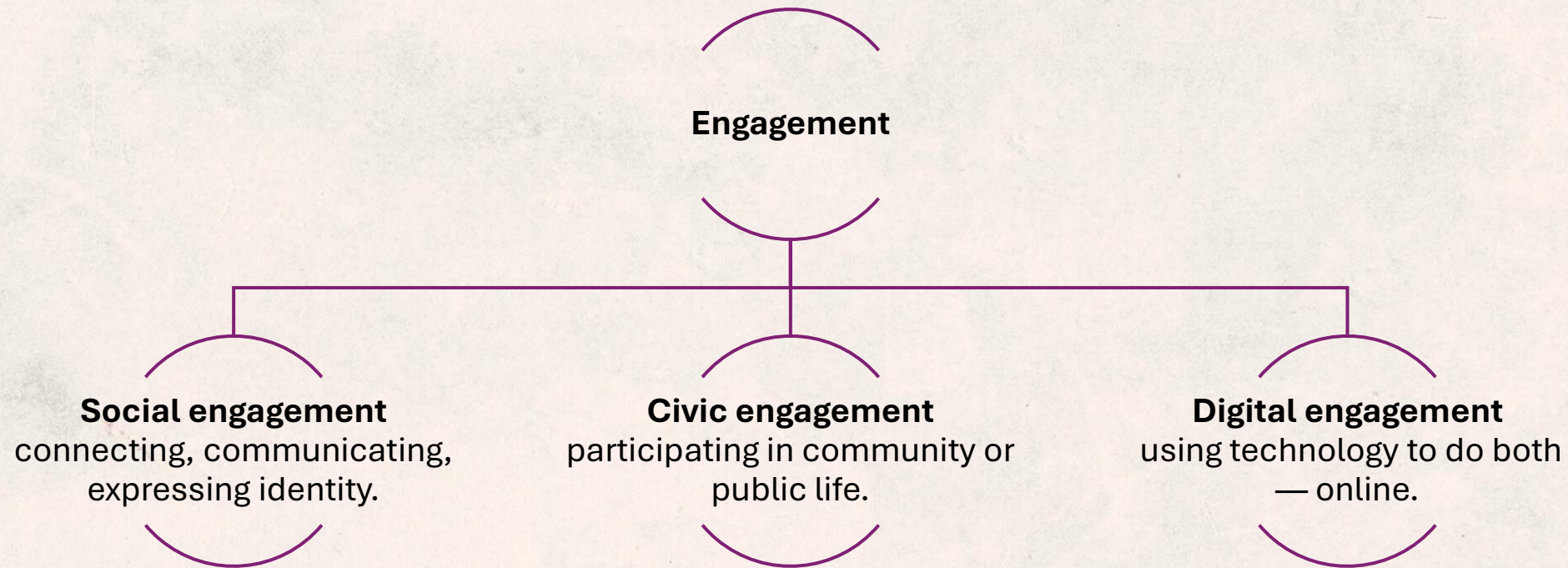


Dr.sc.comm. Liva Kalnaca

29.10.2025.

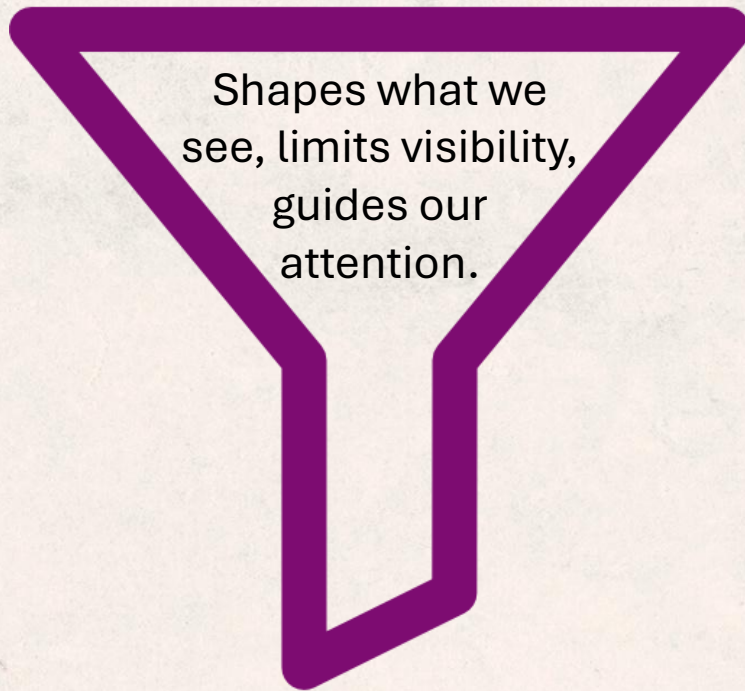
What Do We Mean by “Engagement”?

Engagement = How people **pay attention, interact, and participate** in social, civic, or digital spaces.



Technology as an Amplifier and a Filter

- Technology doesn't just connect us — it **amplifies** and **filters** our engagement.



empower or distort engagement

Everyday Influences of Technology

**Recommendation
algorithms**

Notifications

Doomscrolling

Gamified apps

**Civic campaigns
via TikTok or
Instagram**

If you're not paying for the
product, **you are the product.**

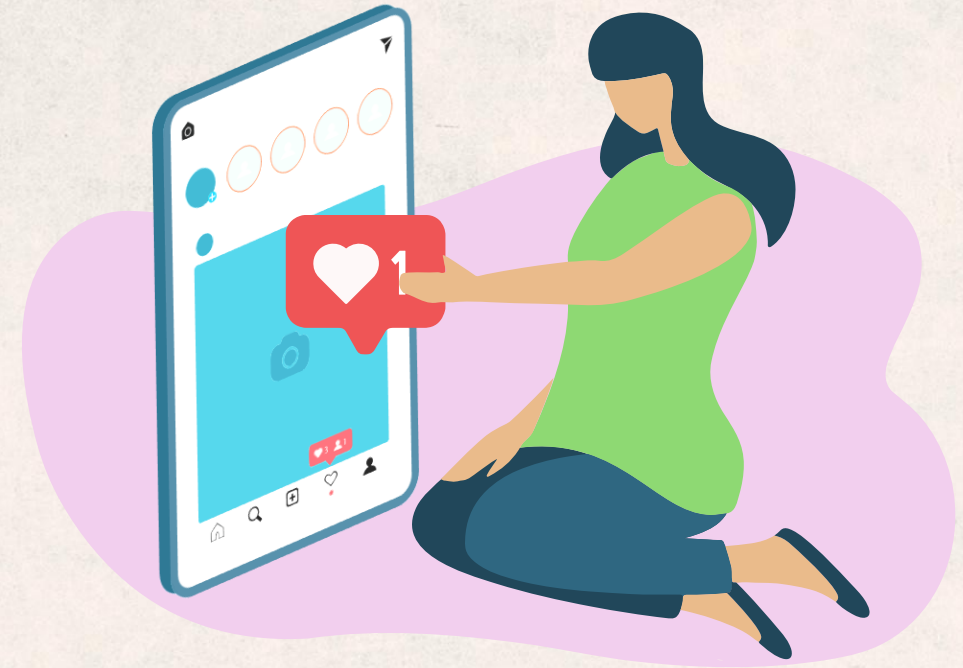
Platforms compete for one thing: **your attention.**

Your time = Their profit



The Attention Economy

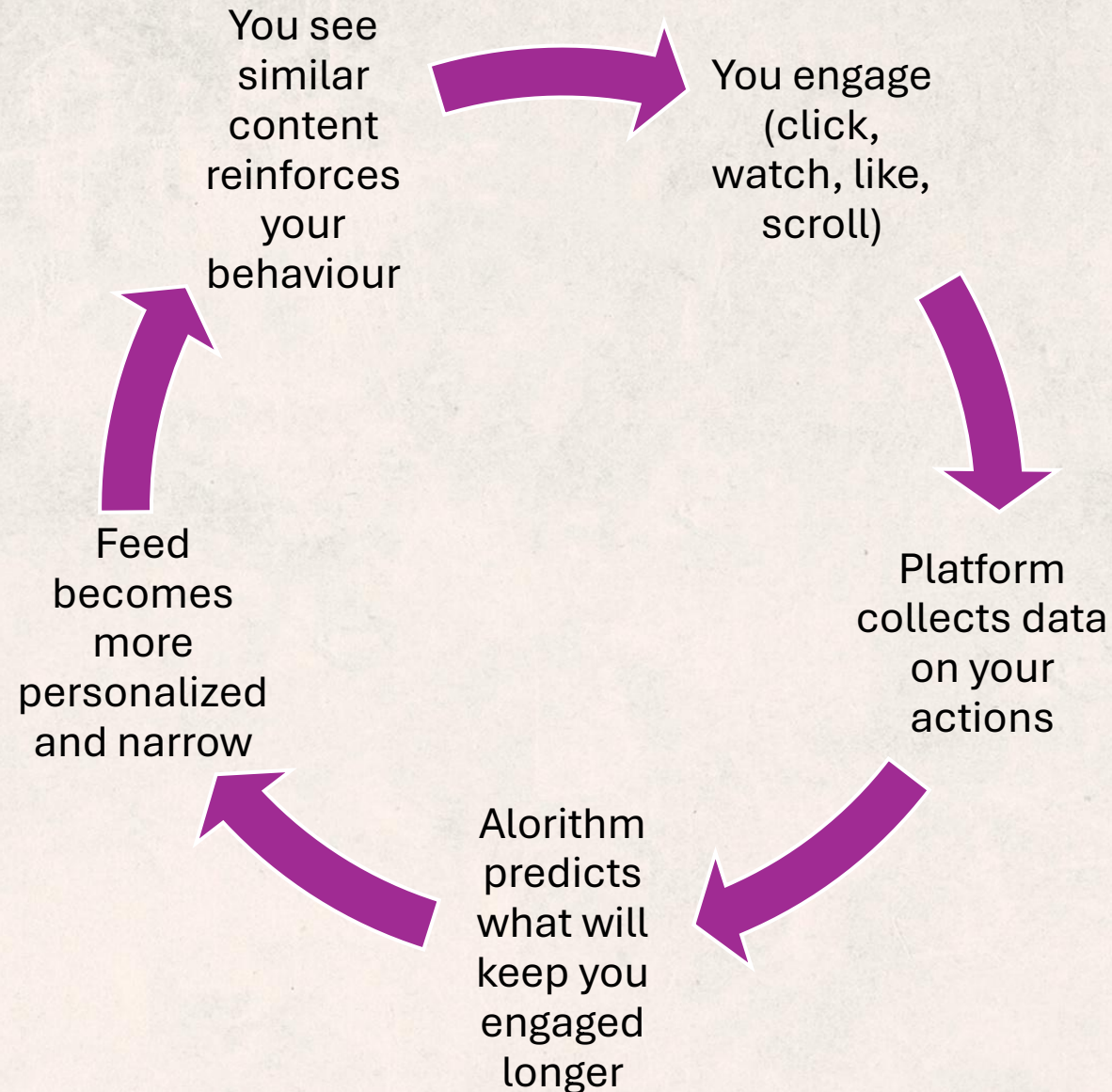
- Digital platforms are built to capture and hold attention — because attention drives ad revenue.
- Every scroll, like, or pause on a post becomes *data* that helps platforms predict what will keep you hooked.
- So the product isn't just content — it's *our attention and behaviour patterns*.



Algorithms are built to
maximize engagement,
not to **maximize truth, balance,**
or wellbeing.

Most engaging = Most visible
But not always most meaningful

The Algorithmic Loop: the loop strengthens with every interaction





What algorithmic loops have you been captured?



The Mechanics of Capturing Attention



Infinite scroll

- Keeps brain in “search mode”



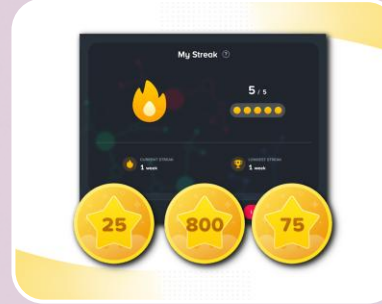
Autoplay

- Removes decision moment



Push notifications

- Reinforces checking habit



Streaks & badges

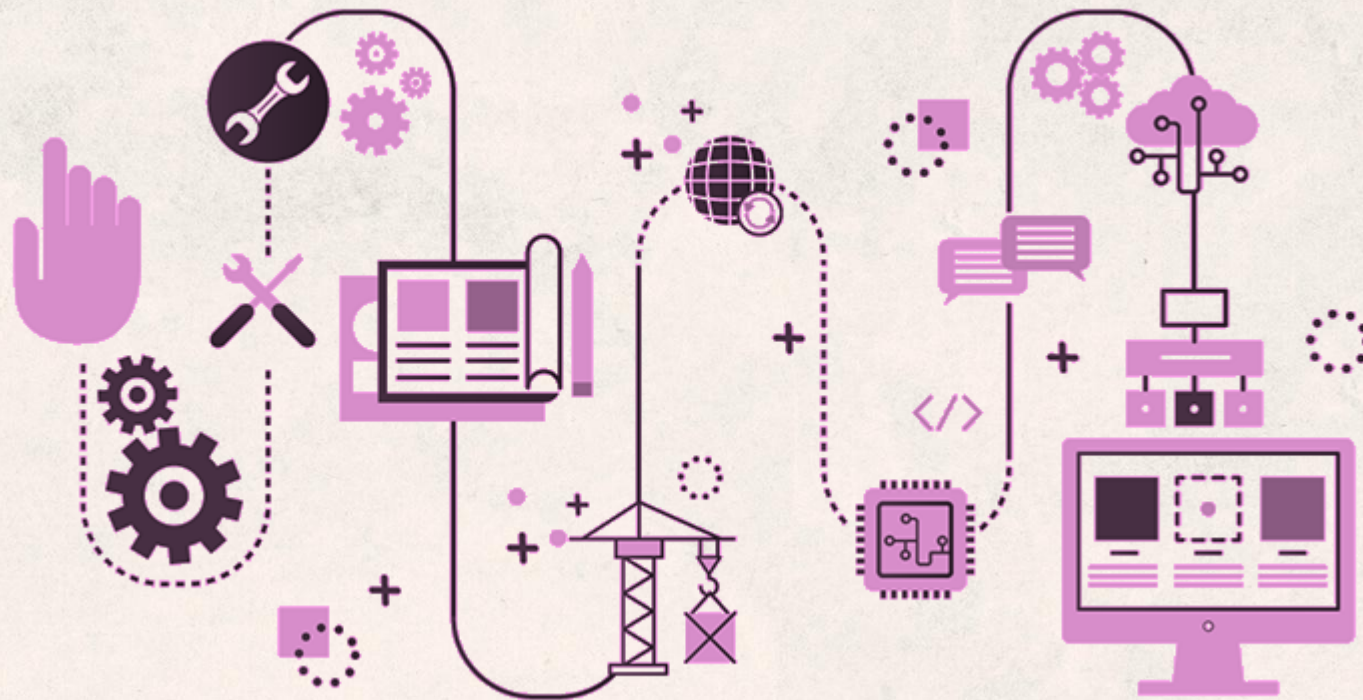
- Uses dopamine-driven motivation



Personalized feeds

Adapts to your micro-behaviours

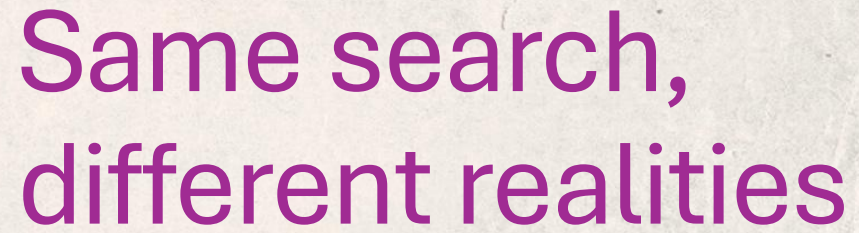
Technology doesn't just show us content.
It decides what's worth seeing.



Are we training algorithm — or is it training us?

- Each platform's algorithm is tuned to maximize a different engagement metric.
- “What works” on one platform may not work on another because each algorithm trains users differently.





1. What kind of content dominates (news, influencers, entertainment, etc.)?
 2. Tone: positive / negative / emotional / informative
 3. Who the main sources or voices are?
 4. Any ads, hashtags, or suggested related topics?
-
- Did everyone see the same world?
 - Who decides what's 'relevant' or 'important' for you?
 - What might be the impact of this personalization on civic engagement or shared understanding?



If algorithms curate your reality, how can we stay aware of what we're ***not*** seeing?

Technology itself is *neutral* — what matters is how it's *used and optimized*

EMPOWERING

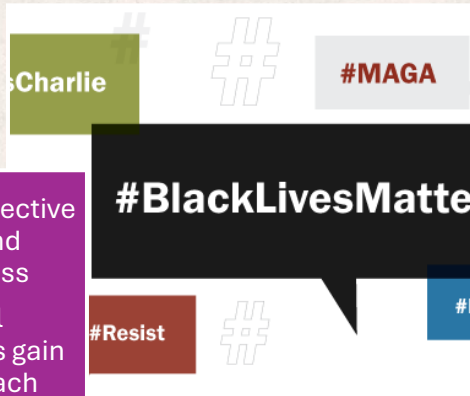
- builds knowledge
- connection
- participation
- ...

MANIPULATION

- exploits emotion
- division
- dependence
- ...

Empowerment happens when users become actors, not just consumer

Enables collective voice and awareness
Social movements gain global reach



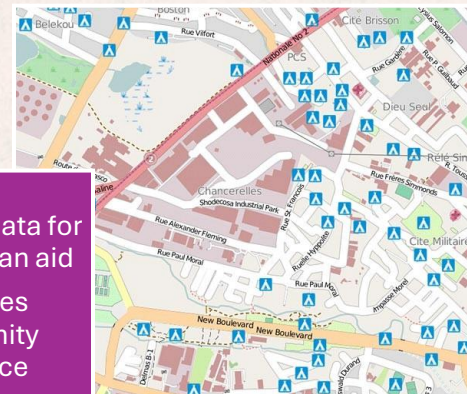
Democratizes access to education
Expands lifelong learning



Connects citizens with institutions
Improves accountability and transparency



Collective data for humanitarian aid
Increases community resilience



Visual creativity for causes
Engages younger audiences



Manipulation often arises from *optimization for engagement metrics*, not intent to inform

Echo chambers
Show users only like-minded views
Polarization, loss of shared reality



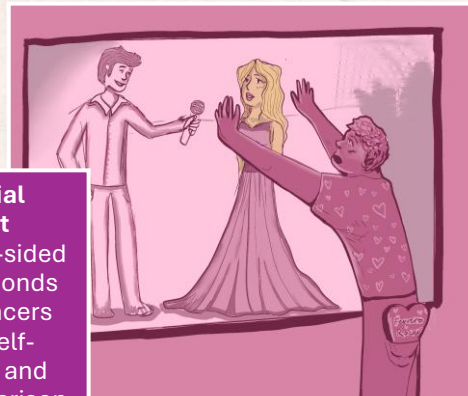
Outrage cycles
Reward emotionally charged content
Anger spreads faster than facts



Misinformation networks
Spread false or misleading narratives
Undermines trust and democracy



Parasocial attachment
Creates one-sided emotional bonds with influencers
Distorts self-perception and social comparison

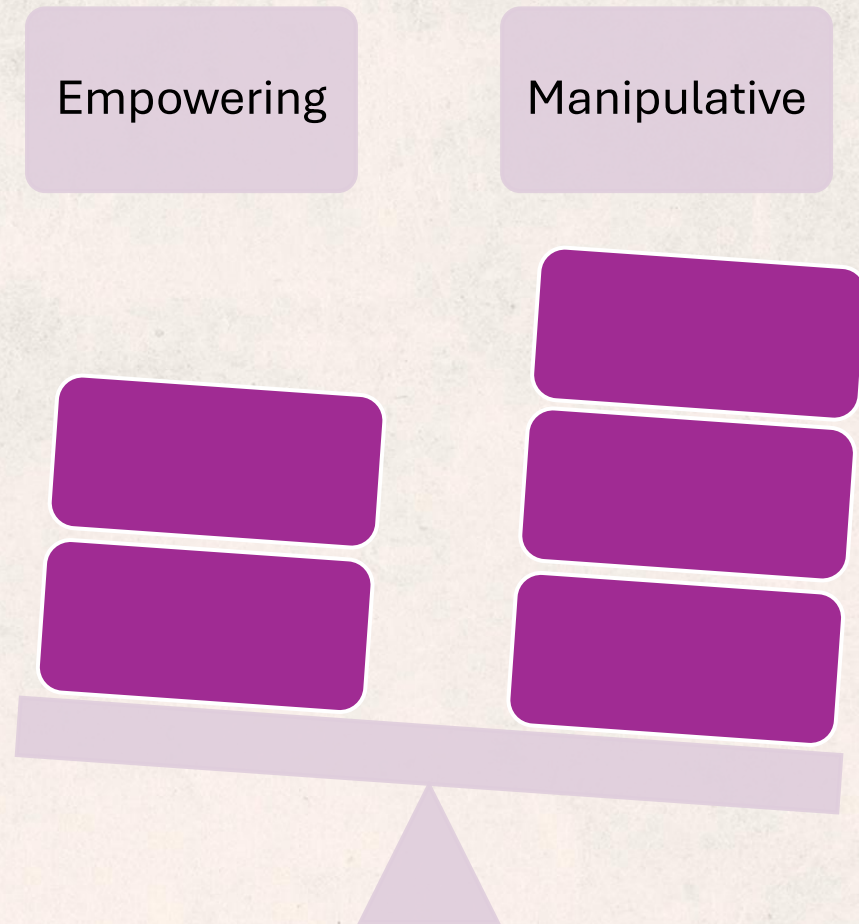


Gamified engagement loops
Use streaks, likes, or rewards to drive use
Dependency, shorter attention spans





Technology reflects human values — what we reward online shapes what grows



What Is “Meaningful Engagement”?

Clicks → Connection

- Builds understanding and participation
- Respects attention and mental wellbeing
- Encourages contribution, not just consumption
- Strengthens trust, empathy, and learning

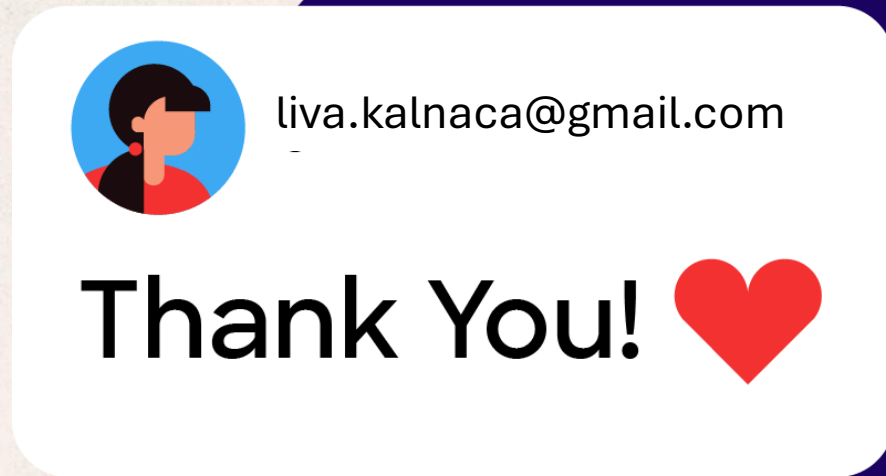


Design for empathy, curiosity, or care — not only metrics

- How could Instagram promote real dialogue instead of likes?
- What if YouTube rewarded insightful comments instead of watch time?
- How could a school or organization encourage digital wellbeing?
- What would a 'slow news' app look like?
- Your suggestions?

What would the internet look like if we designed it around meaning instead of attention?





Any questions?