

Post doctorate in sociology, political science or information and communication sciences

Newsrooms adjustment to content sharing platforms during the 2022 french presidential campaign

Context

The history of the web has been marked by the development of Google at the end of the 1990s, then of Facebook, Twitter and other content sharing platforms since the mid-2000s. These actors have profoundly contributed to changing the face of the web, particularly with regard to political information during elections (Perez-Lagos 2020, Venturini & Rogers 2019). Google and Facebook now account for at least 70% of the sources of traffic to online media content. These actors — and others — thus occupy a new position within the media industries, that of infomediation (Smyrnaiois & Rebillard 2019).

In this environment, the hegemonic position of infomediaries allows them not only to impose their tools and formats on the media, but also to impulse and foster non-journalistic practices, routines and cultures with which online news media must deal (Christin 2020). Facebook and Google, whose algorithms are based on quite different logics of indexing and making content visible to Internet users, have each developed extremely fine-tuned strategies to establish their hold on the media (Ouakrat 2020, Mattelart 2020), going so far as to intervene in the training of journalists and in direct funding of newsrooms, via calls for projects, which they finance and supervise (in particular collaborative fact-checking projects, see Smyrnaiois et al. 2018) and direct funding of content exclusive to their platforms. Several projects have also recently mobilized AI and algorithms not only in the delivery but also in the production of editorial content (Beckett 2019), with the triple promise of greater efficiency in human labor, greater relevance of content, and rapid economic profitability from the adoption of these tools.

On the audience side the logics of media exposure have also been modified due to the shift from a self-selection of content logic, often considered beneficial to citizen participation in the public sphere and protective of consensus and moderation (Stroud, 2017) to more invisible « pre-selection » protocols (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2016). The concept of incidental exposure has therefore been proposed to describe the new media environment in which individuals are exposed to information unintentionally during a wide range of online interactions (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2020; Weeks et al., 2017; Yadamsuren and Erdelez, 2010). It is now widely recognized that this transformation of the public sphere has « a potentially negative impact on democracy » as stated by the European High Level Expert Group on Media Diversity (Viķe-Freiberga et al., 2013). Indeed, in such a media environment, users have only partial control over the content that is transmitted to them. For their part, experts and public authorities have little control over the quality of the content that platforms and advertisers promote. Finally, researchers lack data to study the biases induced in information exposure (Pasquale, 2015)

Missions of the post-doctoral fellow

The post-doctoral fellow will be part of an ongoing research initiative on the changes in the production and reception of media content due to media algorithmization. It will work on a case study of the 2022 french presidential election campaign.

In relation with the researchers involved in the supervision of the project, the post-doctoral fellow will conduct an in-depth field investigation on a) the adjustment of the newsrooms of a selection of French media to the algorithmic constraints imposed by the diffusion of content on the web and social networks (adaptations and adjustments, anticipation and circumvention, cooperations and confrontations in the processes of production, diffusion, sharing and moderation of the content generated by the editorial offices and by their audiences) ; b) the circulation of content produced by these newsrooms on social networks and the web (on different media, pseudo-media, platforms, etc., but also on personal social networks and its effects in terms of audience participation or polarization.

The post-doctoral fellow :

- will participate in the definition of the field chosen for the investigation (media and platforms that will be chosen for the investigation) ;
- produce a literature review relevant to the investigation;
- conduct interviews and observations in the selected media outlets and with the platforms as well as other actors in the media coverage of electoral campaigns;
- Contribute to the collection and processing of data to measure media content dissemination practices on platforms, content sharing practices and audience exposure habits;
- participate with the researchers involved in the project in the valorization of the results of the survey in national or international conferences and journals.

Position in the organization

The post-doctoral fellow will be hosted in the PACTE laboratory's Regulations team and will be attached to the MIAI Algorithmic Society Chair. He/she will work in close collaboration with Gilles Bastin (Pacte), Emmanuel Marty (Gresec) et Paolo Frasca (Gipsa Lab)

Desired profile

- PhD in sociology, political science or Information-Communication on media, social networking or content sharing platforms;
- Very good command of interviewing and ethnographic observation and/or issues related to data collection on platforms;
- Very good level in English

Work environment

The post-doctoral fellow will be recruited for a period of 12 months starting October 1, 2021. The proposed salary corresponds to the employment grid for contractual researchers (young researcher HS03, i.e. a salary between 2395 and 3847 € gross monthly). All expenses related to the post-doc (material environment, travel, etc.) will be covered by the Chair.

Candidates must send their application to the following address before July 1st : gilles.bastin@iepg.fr It should include :

- A letter of application (in French or in English);
- The PhD diploma and the thesis defense report;
- A CV
- A letter of recommendation appreciating the capacity to carry out the project (in French or in English).

Références

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Should we worry about filter bubbles? *Internet Policy Rev.*