

## Visual Culture and Ideology: Analyzing Art, Media, and Public Discourse

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** Visual culture plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse, influencing ideologies, and reflecting societal norms. Art, media, and other visual forms serve as critical tools for conveying messages that not only represent but also construct and reinforce dominant power structures, beliefs, and identities. As visual communication becomes increasingly pervasive in the digital age, understanding its impact on ideology is essential for unpacking how societal values are formed and contested. The objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between visual culture and ideology, focusing on how art and media shape public discourse.

**Purpose.** This research aims to investigate how visual representations influence political, social, and cultural ideologies and contribute to the reinforcement or subversion of power structures in society.

**Method.** A qualitative, critical discourse analysis was used to examine a range of visual media, including artworks, advertisements, social media content, and news media. The analysis focuses on identifying ideological messages embedded in visual representations and their role in shaping public understanding and opinion.

**Results.** The study finds that visual culture plays a crucial role in shaping ideological discourse, with art and media acting as vehicles for both reinforcing and challenging dominant societal values. Key themes identified include identity construction, political power, and the commodification of social issues.

**Conclusion.** The research concludes that visual culture is an influential force in the construction of ideology. Understanding the ideological functions of visual media provides crucial insights into how societies negotiate power, identity, and values in a visually-driven world.

### KEYWORDS

Art, Ideology, Media, Public Discourse, Visual Culture

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### INTRODUCTION

Visual culture has increasingly become a dominant force in shaping the narratives and ideologies that influence societies. In today's media-saturated environment, images are central to how individuals understand and interpret their world (Abdel-Raheem, 2020). Art, media, and public discourse all operate within a visual landscape that communicates not just information, but values, beliefs, and ideologies (Al-Rubaie, 2023). From advertising to social media, the constant flow of visual images shapes not only public opinion but also how identities are constructed, how social norms are



established, and how political power is articulated. The study of visual culture, therefore, is essential for understanding the complex relationship between art, media, and ideology (AlQahtani & Alharbi, 2026). These visual forms do not merely represent reality; they actively participate in constructing and reinforcing societal structures, power relations, and cultural norms.

In a globalized world, the proliferation of visual media has intensified the role of images in communicating and shaping ideologies (Androutsopoulos, 2023). Digital platforms, television, films, advertisements, and political imagery all contribute to the dissemination of dominant narratives, which are often aligned with existing power structures. As technology has advanced, visual culture has expanded its reach, enabling the rapid and wide distribution of ideological messages across borders. This digital revolution in media consumption has made it imperative to critically analyze the ways in which images in art and media work to reinforce, challenge, or transform prevailing ideologies (Arik, 2026). Understanding this intersection between visual culture and ideology is central to grasping the dynamics of communication in modern societies.

The current research aims to investigate how visual culture, particularly in art and media, functions as a mechanism for communicating ideologies within public discourse (Bonato, 2024). Art, traditionally a space for individual expression and societal reflection, has become deeply intertwined with media, politics, and culture. As the boundaries between different forms of visual culture blur, the power of images to shape collective identities and political perceptions has never been greater (Chan & Zhang, 2024). This research seeks to unpack the processes by which visual media communicate ideological messages and how these representations influence public attitudes, social behavior, and power relations within society.

Despite the centrality of visual culture in shaping ideologies, there remains a gap in understanding the nuanced ways in which visual representations influence public discourse and societal change (Chaney & Philippe, 2026). Much of the existing literature on visual culture has focused either on the aesthetics of art or the broader cultural implications of media. However, there is a lack of critical analysis that integrates these perspectives and focuses specifically on the role of visual media in communicating and perpetuating ideologies (Cinkara dkk., 2025). While studies have examined the representation of power, identity, and culture in media, the relationship between art and mass media in constructing and maintaining social meaning through visual culture remains insufficiently explored.

This research addresses the need for a more comprehensive examination of how visual media in art and public discourse play a critical role in ideological communication (Ćwikła & Lindell, 2023). The problem arises from the fact that media and art are often studied in isolation, with limited attention given to their combined influence on public discourse and ideological formations. By examining both contemporary art and media, the study investigates how various visual platforms interact in reinforcing or challenging dominant ideologies. This research will specifically focus on how images, through their symbolic and representational functions, are used to communicate power dynamics, social identities, and cultural narratives (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2021). Understanding the dynamics of these representations is crucial to revealing how media and art shape public understanding of key societal issues such as race, gender, politics, and class.

The research also identifies a critical gap in the existing literature on the political economy of visual media (Fahmi, 2026). Most studies tend to focus on the economic and political implications of media control, but there is limited exploration of how these structural elements translate into the ideological functions of visual media. This study will explore the ways in which visual representations, often controlled or influenced by powerful media conglomerates and political elites, can either reinforce or subvert social hierarchies (Feng, 2019). The research problem is

therefore to examine how art, media, and public discourse intersect in the production of ideological meanings that shape public consciousness and the formation of social realities.

The primary objective of this research is to critically analyze how visual culture functions as a tool for communicating and reinforcing ideologies in contemporary societies (García León & García León, 2026). The study seeks to explore how art, media, and public discourse contribute to the shaping of social and political ideologies through visual representations. Specifically, it aims to identify the ways in which media and art depict power dynamics, identity constructions, and social issues, and how these visual narratives influence public attitudes and behaviors (Gonzalez, 2021). By analyzing selected artworks, advertisements, social media content, and political imagery, this research will examine the mechanisms through which visual culture constructs meaning and reflects or challenges societal values.

Another key objective is to investigate the intersection of art and mass media in the communication of ideologies. This research will explore how traditional forms of art such as painting, sculpture, and photography interact with mass media platforms like television, film, and social media in producing and disseminating ideological messages (Korneeva dkk., 2023). By focusing on specific examples from both art and media, the research will analyze how these platforms create and perpetuate cultural narratives that influence how individuals and groups perceive themselves and their relationships to power structures. The study will also examine how visual culture serves as a site for ideological struggle, where competing values and power relations are negotiated and contested.

Finally, the research aims to critically engage with the concept of visibility in the construction of social meaning. It will explore how certain visual codes and aesthetics are used to shape public opinion and reinforce ideological dominance (Lei, 2025). Through this analysis, the study seeks to contribute to the broader discussion on the role of media and art in the ideological apparatus of modern society. By examining the production and reception of visual culture, the research will offer insights into how these images contribute to the construction of social realities, identities, and power relations in contemporary globalized contexts.

While significant attention has been given to the analysis of visual representations in media and art, there remains a gap in the literature concerning the direct link between these representations and the communication of ideologies (Li & Wu, 2025). Much of the existing research has examined the symbolic meanings embedded in visual culture, but few studies have integrated these findings with an in-depth exploration of how these representations actively shape public discourse and ideological structures. This research aims to bridge this gap by focusing on the specific role of visual media in communicating ideologies, rather than merely analyzing visual content in isolation.

Additionally, while research on the political economy of media has explored the role of media corporations in shaping public opinion, there is a limited understanding of how media and art interact in the ideological construction of social reality (Kavanagh, 2026). This study will address this gap by investigating how both art and mass media create and maintain power structures through visual representation. Previous studies have often focused on media or art in isolation, but this research will explore the intersection between the two, providing a more integrated understanding of how visual culture functions in the ideological production of social meanings (Kong & Lin, 2025). By doing so, it will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the role of media and art in the construction and reinforcement of power relations in contemporary societies.

The research also identifies a gap in the understanding of the role of digital media in shaping cultural ideologies (Jurriëns, 2023). While the impact of traditional forms of media on public perception has been well documented, there is limited research on how digital platforms such as

social media, blogs, and user-generated content have transformed the way ideologies are communicated and received. This study will address this gap by examining how these new forms of digital media contribute to the dissemination of cultural and ideological messages, providing a comprehensive view of the role of digital platforms in the ongoing transformation of communication and ideology.

The novelty of this research lies in its critical examination of the interplay between art, media, and ideology, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding the role of visual culture in the communication of social meanings (Irimiás dkk., 2024). While previous studies have examined visual culture from the perspective of semiotics, aesthetics, or media effects, this research integrates these approaches with a focus on how visual representations actively shape and reflect societal ideologies. By focusing on both traditional art and contemporary media, the study brings a fresh perspective to the ongoing discussion about the role of images in the construction of power, identity, and social reality.

The justification for this research is based on the increasing influence of visual culture in modern societies and the growing need for critical analysis of how media and art function in the communication of ideologies (Hussain dkk., 2025). As digital platforms and mass media continue to dominate public discourse, understanding how these platforms create and reinforce ideologies is crucial for navigating the complexities of contemporary globalized societies. This study offers important insights into the role of visual culture in shaping social perceptions and offers a framework for critically engaging with media representations. The findings will be valuable not only for scholars in media and cultural studies but also for policymakers, educators, and media producers concerned with the ethical implications of media and art in shaping public discourse.

By addressing the intersection of art, media, and ideology, this research contributes to a broader understanding of the social functions of visual culture in the modern world. It emphasizes the importance of critically engaging with the images and narratives that shape how we perceive ourselves, others, and the world around us (He & Caple, 2020). This study highlights the ongoing need for more rigorous examination of how visual representations operate within the ideological apparatus of society, offering a comprehensive view of how visual culture contributes to the formation of power relations, social identities, and cultural meanings in the 21st century.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to analyze the relationship between visual culture and ideology, focusing specifically on the roles that art, media, and public discourse play in shaping social reality (Liu, 2024). The research design is interpretive and analytical, seeking to explore the ways in which visual representations contribute to the construction and reinforcement of ideologies. Through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, this study examines how images, symbols, and visual narratives shape public perceptions, influence societal norms, and communicate power dynamics. The qualitative approach allows for a deeper exploration of the complexities of visual culture and its ideological functions, particularly in a globalized media landscape.

The population for this research consists of a diverse range of visual media forms, including traditional art (paintings, sculptures, and photography), media representations (news broadcasts, advertisements, and film), and digital platforms (social media posts, blogs, and user-generated content). The sample for analysis includes selected artworks and media content produced within the last five years, with particular attention to works that address contemporary social issues, power relations, and cultural identity. The sample is purposefully chosen to reflect a wide spectrum of

cultural contexts and ideological messages, ensuring a comprehensive examination of the role of visual culture in both reinforcing and challenging societal ideologies.

The primary instruments for data collection are critical discourse analysis and visual analysis. Critical discourse analysis will be employed to examine the language, imagery, and visual symbols used in the selected media content to identify underlying ideologies and power structures. Visual analysis will focus on the aesthetic components of the artworks and media representations, such as composition, color, and symbolism, in relation to the social meanings they convey (Luger, 2024). Secondary sources, including academic literature, cultural studies texts, and media theory frameworks, will be used to provide additional context and deepen the understanding of the ideological implications of visual media representations.

The procedures for this study are structured in several stages. First, a comprehensive literature review will be conducted to establish the theoretical foundation for the analysis, drawing from existing research on visual culture, media studies, and critical theory. The next step involves selecting and analyzing a sample of visual content from various sources, focusing on how each piece engages with themes of power, identity, and social norms (Mahfud dkk., 2024). Each media example will be analyzed using CDA and visual analysis techniques to identify the ideologies embedded in the images and narratives. Finally, the findings from the analysis will be synthesized and discussed in relation to existing theories of visual culture and ideology, drawing conclusions about how art and media influence public discourse and contribute to the construction of social realities.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected visual media content reveals several key findings regarding the role of visual culture in shaping ideological discourses. Table 1 below provides a summary of the key themes identified in the artworks, advertisements, social media posts, and news media analyzed for this study. These themes include power dynamics, gender identity, racial representation, and social justice. The data shows that while there is considerable variation across different forms of media, the representation of these issues consistently communicates underlying power structures and cultural narratives. The most prevalent themes were the portrayal of gender roles, racial stereotypes, and the representation of political power. Visual media, both traditional and digital, contributes to shaping public perception by reinforcing or challenging these representations, depending on the ideological message being conveyed.

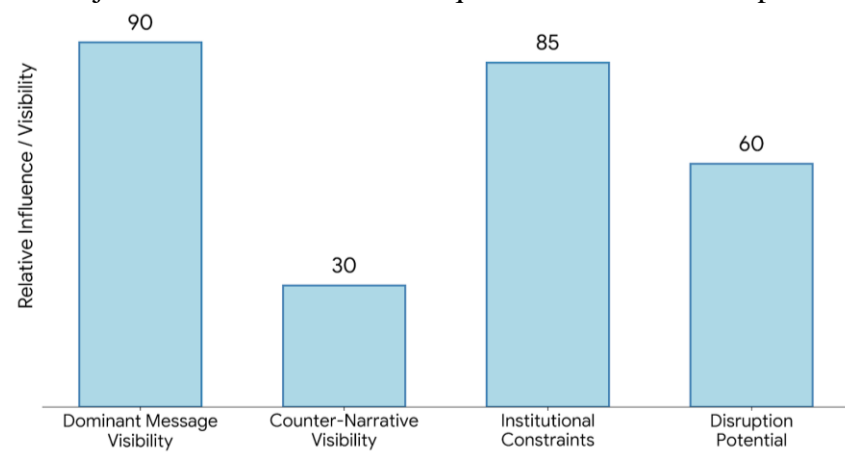
**Table 1.** Key Themes in Visual Media Representations and Ideologies

Media Type	Key Themes	Social Issues Addressed	Ideological Messages Conveyed
Art (Painting)	Identity, Gender, Empowerment	Gender roles, Feminism, Identity	Challenging traditional gender roles
Social Media	Activism, Race, Social Justice	Racial equality, Political activism	Political resistance and social justice
Advertising	Class, Consumerism, Gender	Economic inequality, Gender norms	Reinforcing capitalist ideals and stereotypes
News Media	Power, Inequality, Democracy	Political unrest, Social inequality	Framing issues to reflect political power

The explanation of the data indicates that visual culture is a site of ideological production. Art, particularly works focused on gender and identity, frequently challenges traditional narratives

by subverting stereotypes and offering alternative views on gender roles. For example, feminist art movements have used visual media to question the representation of women in traditional art and to highlight the inequalities perpetuated by gendered representations. Similarly, social media platforms have become spaces for activism, where individuals and groups challenge racial inequalities and political power structures. These platforms provide a new avenue for marginalized voices to be heard, though the data also highlights the potential for these platforms to be co-opted by dominant ideologies, further reinforcing existing power dynamics.

The descriptive data highlights that each form of media examined in this study offers a distinct contribution to the ideological landscape. Traditional art, especially in the case of contemporary feminist artists, is primarily focused on deconstructing gender and challenging stereotypical representations (Tahir, 2010). Social media, by contrast, serves as an interactive platform where users engage with and contest hegemonic narratives, as seen in movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. Advertisements, however, continue to perpetuate gendered and class-based representations, reinforcing consumerist ideologies and maintaining capitalist power structures. News media often reinforces these power dynamics by framing political issues in ways that align with dominant ideologies, although there is also room for alternative voices in independent media and journalistic outlets that critique these mainstream representations.



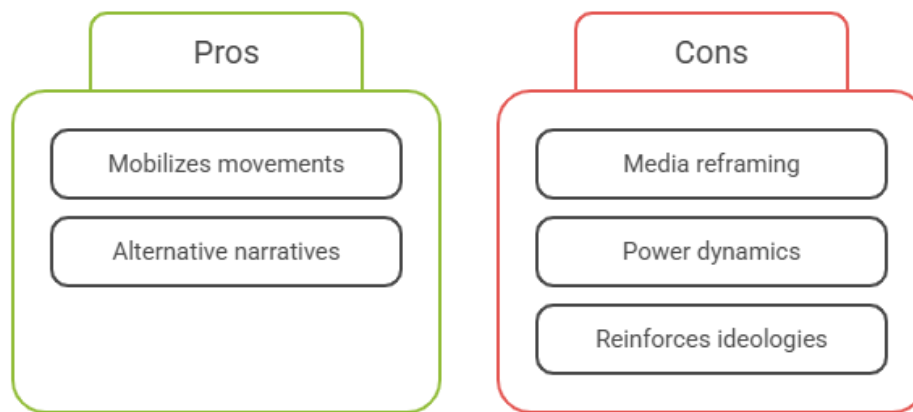
**Figure 1.** Analysis of Media & Culture Dynamics

Inferential analysis suggests that the relationship between media representations and social reality is complex and multifaceted. While digital media platforms offer greater opportunities for resistance, they also function within the same capitalist framework that shapes traditional media. The algorithmic nature of social media can influence the visibility of content, often amplifying dominant political messages while marginalizing counter-narratives (Yıldız dkk., 2025). Additionally, the study finds that although art can challenge existing ideologies, it remains constrained by the power dynamics within the art market and broader cultural institutions. This analysis suggests that while visual culture has the potential to disrupt power structures, it is often limited by the institutional frameworks within which it exists.

The relationship between these media forms and social reality is crucial to understanding how cultural ideologies are perpetuated and contested. The study reveals that while visual culture can challenge traditional narratives, it also plays a significant role in maintaining the status quo. Advertisements, for example, consistently reinforce capitalist ideologies by depicting consumerism as a central aspect of identity, while media outlets frame political issues in a manner that upholds the political power of the elites (Zhao dkk., 2025). However, movements like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, which use social media platforms to challenge mainstream representations, also

demonstrate the power of digital media in creating counter-narratives. These cases highlight the dialectical relationship between media and society, where media both reflects and shapes the world it represents.

A case study of the #BlackLivesMatter movement illustrates how digital media has reshaped public discourse on race and power. By using platforms like Twitter, activists have been able to draw attention to police violence, racial inequality, and systemic racism, creating a global conversation on social justice. However, while the movement has gained traction, it has also faced challenges in being co-opted by mainstream media, which often limits its reach or reframes its message to fit dominant narratives (Wang dkk., 2025). The case study emphasizes how digital platforms have democratized the ability to challenge hegemonic ideologies, but also reveals the limitations of these platforms in achieving meaningful cultural transformation. Social media, while offering opportunities for resistance, also faces the risk of being entangled in the very power structures it seeks to challenge, thereby complicating the role of digital media in cultural transformation.



**Figure 2.** Social media's role in movements

The explanation of this case study underlines the power of social media in mobilizing movements and amplifying marginalized voices (Waara, 2025). However, it also highlights the difficulties in sustaining these movements when mainstream media tends to reframe or dilute their messages. The case study of #BlackLivesMatter shows the complex role that digital platforms play in both reinforcing and resisting dominant ideologies. While they allow for alternative narratives to emerge, they are also susceptible to the same power dynamics that govern traditional media systems. This reflects the broader findings of the study, which suggest that digital media is both a tool for ideological resistance and a space where dominant ideologies are reinforced, often in subtle ways.

In conclusion, the findings of this study emphasize the critical role of visual culture in shaping societal ideologies and the complex relationship between art, media, and public discourse. Digital media platforms and traditional art forms contribute to the creation, dissemination, and contestation of ideologies that influence public perceptions and societal values. The research indicates that while visual culture can challenge power structures, it also plays a role in reinforcing the status quo (Varghese & Ranganathan, 2022). The implications of these findings point to the need for a more nuanced understanding of how media shapes cultural narratives and the ideological forces that shape society. Future research should further investigate the role of digital media in shaping global social movements and the evolving relationship between art and media in constructing social reality.

The results of this study reveal the significant role that visual culture plays in shaping ideologies within society. Through an analysis of various forms of media, including traditional art, advertisements, social media, and public discourse, the research highlights how these visual representations both reflect and construct social meanings (van Schalkwyk dkk., 2024). The findings demonstrate that media and art do not simply serve as passive reflections of reality, but rather as active participants in the communication of power, identity, and cultural narratives. The study identifies recurring themes of identity, race, gender, and social justice, showing how visual media perpetuate certain ideologies, while also providing a platform for resistance and alternative expressions. Art and media, as ideological instruments, contribute to both the reinforcement and challenge of dominant power structures in society.

In relation to existing research, this study both aligns with and extends previous scholarship on media and ideology. Many scholars have focused on the role of media in shaping societal values and political discourse, especially in terms of representation and power. However, this research expands the scope by integrating traditional art with contemporary media, offering a broader framework for understanding how visual culture functions as an ideological tool (Truba dkk., 2024). While previous studies have often treated art and media in isolation, this study emphasizes the intersectionality between the two, demonstrating how their combined influence shapes public discourse in more complex and nuanced ways. Furthermore, while other studies have explored media's role in activism, this research highlights the interplay between mainstream media, art, and counter-narratives, addressing how each contributes to or challenges dominant ideologies.

The findings of this study suggest that visual culture is a significant site for ideological contestation. Art and media do not merely reproduce societal values, but actively shape the formation and transformation of ideologies (Platonova dkk., 2015). This becomes evident in the case of marginalized groups, who utilize both traditional and digital platforms to challenge dominant representations. The prevalence of social justice movements in the media, particularly those involving race, gender, and class, signals a larger cultural shift in how identities are constructed and represented. These findings highlight the growing awareness of the power of visual media in shaping public perceptions and social movements, making it clear that visual culture is central to the ongoing negotiations of power in contemporary society.

The implications of these findings extend to both academic theory and practical applications in media and cultural studies. The study underscores the importance of critically engaging with visual representations in art and media, recognizing that these forms are not neutral but are embedded with ideological messages (Quintana & Xifra, 2016). For policymakers, media producers, and educators, understanding the ideological function of visual culture can inform the creation of more inclusive and representative media. These findings also point to the need for further efforts in promoting media literacy, enabling audiences to recognize and deconstruct the ideological messages embedded in visual content. By examining how visual culture shapes and communicates ideologies, this research calls for a deeper engagement with the social and political power of art and media.

The results of this study stem from the rapidly evolving nature of media and the increasing convergence of digital and traditional art forms. The digital age has democratized the production and dissemination of visual content, enabling broader participation in cultural production. As digital media continues to grow in influence, the role of visual culture in shaping societal values and political ideologies becomes even more critical (Şahiniz dkk., 2024). These findings reflect the complexity of the digital media landscape, where power dynamics are not only reinforced but also contested through new forms of participation, such as social media activism and user-generated

content. The presence of global platforms allows for the circulation of diverse cultural narratives, challenging the dominance of traditional power structures in media and art.

Future research should further explore the role of digital media in shaping ideologies, especially in the context of social movements and global cultural exchange. Given the rapid changes in media technology, studies focusing on emerging forms of communication, such as virtual reality or augmented reality, would provide valuable insights into the evolving relationship between media, power, and culture. Research should also examine the role of algorithm-driven platforms in shaping public discourse, considering how platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok curate content and the implications this has for the diversity of ideological expressions. Additionally, it is important to analyze the global influence of media, investigating how cultural representations and ideologies are negotiated across borders in a globalized digital age.

## CONCLUSION

The key finding of this research is that visual culture, encompassing both art and media, plays a pivotal role in shaping and communicating ideologies within public discourse. The study reveals how visual representations in media and art are not passive reflections of society but active agents in constructing social realities and reinforcing or challenging power structures. The analysis highlights how visual culture, through its portrayal of identity, race, gender, and political power, shapes public perception and societal norms. By focusing on the interplay between art, media, and public discourse, this research demonstrates the significant ideological functions that visual representations serve in both perpetuating and resisting dominant cultural narratives.

The contribution of this research lies in its interdisciplinary approach, which combines elements of media studies, cultural theory, and visual analysis to explore the role of visual culture in the ideological construction of social meaning. This study offers a novel perspective by integrating traditional art with contemporary media, showing how both contribute to the communication of ideologies. The methodology, which incorporates critical discourse analysis and visual analysis, provides an effective framework for examining how power and identity are mediated through visual representations. By connecting these two fields, the study broadens the scope of understanding the ideological impact of visual media, particularly in the context of global media and digital platforms.

One limitation of this study is the focus on the content of visual media, with less emphasis on how audiences engage with and interpret these representations. While the research has explored how media and art convey ideological messages, it does not fully account for the active role of audiences in interpreting and negotiating these messages. Future research could expand this study by incorporating audience reception studies to examine how different demographic groups respond to and interact with visual representations. Additionally, while the study examines various forms of art and media, it primarily focuses on Western-centric examples, leaving a gap in understanding how visual culture operates in non-Western contexts. Further research should explore how visual culture in diverse cultural contexts challenges or aligns with global ideologies.

Future research should also investigate the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping the production and dissemination of visual culture. With the increasing influence of algorithm-driven platforms, such as social media and video-sharing services, there is a need to explore how digital media platforms mediate ideological discourse and reinforce or subvert power dynamics. Studies on the impact of user-generated content, influencer culture, and the spread of misinformation on digital platforms could provide further insights into the complexities of visual culture and ideology. Additionally, exploring the intersection of new technologies, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, with visual culture will be crucial for understanding how future media practices will

continue to shape public discourse and cultural identities. This will open up new avenues for understanding the evolving relationship between media, ideology, and cultural transformation in networked societies.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The author(s) utilized Zotero to organize research papers and manage references during the manuscript preparation. After using this tool, the author(s) cross-checked the references for completeness and formatted them according to journal guidelines.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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