



Let's Talk about Social Media and Echo Chambers

(A Thread)

What is an Echo Chamber?

An echo chamber is an online space where a user is faced with media that is consistent with their own views and helps to reinforce their existing beliefs.¹



¹ Gillani, N., Yuan, A., Saveski, M., Vosoughi, S., & Roy, D. (2018). Me, My Echo Chamber, and I. Proceedings of the 2018 World Wide Web Conference on World Wide Web - WWW '18.



How Do Echo Chambers Occur?

Online algorithms promote the spread of political content, in the same way that it curates advertisements for users!

When you  something on Facebook or Instagram, the algorithms take your preferences into account in order to show you more content that caters to your interests.

Recent Ad Activity

See ads you recently interacted with and easily follow up on the ones you care about

Why Would Platforms Track Your Political Engagement?

The more a person is exposed to information that reinforces their point of view, the higher their level of online political participation will be.²

The more you participate on the platform, the more the site is benefitted!

² Feezell, J. T. (2016). Predicting Online Political Participation: The Importance of Selection Bias and Selective Exposure in the Online Setting. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(3), 495–509.

How Do Echo Chambers Occur?

These algorithms can even track your activity outside of the current app that you are using, so that each of your social media accounts reflect each other in terms of news and ads.

**Allow "Instagram" to track
your activity across other
companies' apps and
websites?**

This allows Instagram to provide you
with a better ads experience.

Tip: When you download a social media app, you can refuse to allow these types of permission.

Danger of Echo Chambers

Echo chambers can feed into **political polarization**, where the gap between members of different political parties begins to grow.³ When users are shown content that reinforces their viewpoint, they lose the chance to understand those who hold differing opinions.



Studies have also shown that when polarization is high, **misinformation** spreads at a higher rate than usual.⁴

³ Jerit, J., & Barabas, J. (2012). Partisan perceptual bias and the information environment. *The Journal of Politics*, 74 (03), 672 – 684.

⁴ Cinelli, M., De Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The Echo Chamber Effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(9)

Why is This Important?

45% of Facebook users state that the platform is their primary source of news, and two-thirds of social media users say that they receive at least some of their news information from their social media accounts.⁵



5 Shearer, E. & Gottfried, J. (2017). News use across social media platforms 2017. Pew Research Center.

Why is This Important?

We depend on social media for our news content. If we are only shown information that aligns with what we already believe, we cannot get a holistic understanding of the truth.

Misinformation campaigns are reinforced through echo chambers, assuming that users are not fact-checking the information that they find online.