

Review Article

Open Access

Personalization and Outrage: Examining Sentiment Bias in Google Discover's US Political Coverage

Rupam Shukla

Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India

ABSTRACT

Google Discover is a primary source of traffic for many news publishers across the globe. The United States, in this context, is no exception. In the age of advanced internet systems, driven by AI and algorithms, users' digital behavior determines what content is promoted to them by platforms such as Google. This, in turn, determines how people perceive social and political realities. But, while positioned as a personalized and interest-based news recommendation system, Google Discover's content curation is neither neutral nor free from bias. Instead, it reconfigures existing biases through algorithmic personalization, reinforcing the argument that algorithms are socially embedded and value-laden. Building on prior studies that have found predominantly positive sentiment in Google News, this study shifts focus to Google Discover to understand if similar patterns persist. Using sentiment analysis conducted via Google Cloud's analyze Sentiment method, this research analyses the emotional tone of political news headlines promoted on Google Discover in the United States. Sentiment scores classify headline tone as positive, negative, or neutral, thereby framing media content as algorithmically curated rather than as audience reaction. By employing qualitative content analysis, this study examines how platforms privilege political news headlines with predominantly negative sentiment. It also aims to explore how algorithmically amplified news stories on Google Discover promote a specific group of people and their political ideologies. The study is grounded in Networked Agenda-Setting theory and the Platform Power concept to understand the underlying implications of giving space to certain news on Google Discover over others and showcase how platforms influence audience choices. The study raises concerns about balanced news consumption in highly personalised news environments and points toward the need for greater transparency. Future research could extend this analysis through cross-platform or cross-national comparisons to further explore sentiment bias in algorithmic news ecosystems.

*Corresponding author

Rupam Shukla, Pondicherry University, Puducherry, India.

Received: September 11, 2026; Accepted: September 17, 2026; Published: September 22, 2026

Keywords: Google Discover, Personalisation, News, Sentiments, United States, Politics

Introduction

The patterns of news consumption have undergone a significant transformation in the digital era. While traditional media such as television and newspapers once dominated news dissemination owing to their perceived credibility and institutional authority, audiences are increasingly shifting toward an internet-based media landscape. In this evolving environment, factors such as accessibility, immediacy, and affordability have become central to how people consume news. In such an evolving media landscape as this, platforms such as Google and Yahoo are trying several new ways to reach out to potential readers, thereby amplifying their reader bases. However, even within this internet-based media landscape, there is a continuous evolution of news consumption patterns. From reliance on search-based news, facilitated only after the user entered their queries on search engines, platforms now tend to customise the news based on the past behaviours of the user. This trend is further facilitated by algorithms and their recommender systems that monitor the search patterns of the user and personalise news to cater to their interests. According to data released by NewzDash Founder, an analytical platform for News publishers, traffic from user-initiated search on Google has dropped significantly from 51% in 2023 to just 27% by the end of 2025 [1]. While one may argue that the drop might have

resulted from a decline in news-reading habits by users, a sharp increase in reliance on customised news, as highlighted in the same report, tells a different story, clearly positing the dominance of algorithm-driven news recommender systems. This shift suggests a structural transformation in how audiences encounter news: from active information retrieval to passive algorithmic discovery. In the context of political communication as well, the increasing reliance on algorithmically curated platforms for news consumption has transformed how information is encountered and interpreted. However, several concerns have been raised over time about the neutrality of these recommendation systems. Scholars such as Tarleton Gillespie argue that algorithms increasingly function as gatekeepers of public discourse, shaping what information becomes visible and relevant. Thus, while the interference of human gatekeepers such as editors and publishers is declining, a new form of gatekeeping is promoted by these algorithm-driven recommendation systems. Hence, existing scholarships also suggest that algorithms are no longer tools to merely organise information, but rather they actively structure political communication, haping whose voices are heard and what views are promoted. So, how does the recommendation process happen, and what exactly are this recommendation system?

What is a Recommendation System?

A recommendation system (or recommender system) often operates using machine learning techniques that use data to help

predict, narrow down, and find what people might be looking for from vast information sets. It helps give suggestions to people on what they might wish to read, purchase, or explore. A recommendation system, hence, is usually facilitated by an artificial intelligence or AI algorithm that uses Big Data to give suggestions or recommendations. These recommendations are based on several factors, including past purchases, search history, demographic information, and other factors. These recommender systems play a key role in navigating and discovering information and products that the users might not have found on their own. These systems are trained in a manner that they understand the preferences, previous decisions, and characteristics of people and products using data gathered through impressions, clicks, likes, and shares (What Is a Recommendation System? | Data Science, n.d.). Because of their capability to predict consumer interests and desires on a highly personalized level, recommender systems are a favorite with content and product providers. One of the advantages of these recommender systems in the news media landscape is delivering relevant information and improving the retention of the news stories suggested to the readers. However, these recommendation systems have raised critical questions in the past.

Scholars like David Beer conceptualize algorithms as possessing “social power,” arguing that they actively shape visibility, relevance, and meaning rather than merely organizing information [2]. This perspective is crucial for understanding platforms like Google Discover, where algorithmic decision-making determines not only issue salience but also the affective framing of political content. Furthermore, information delivery through the recommendation system continues to feed similar kinds of information to the readers, thereby leading the users into what is defined as a filter bubble. Hence, there is a lack of information diversity for readers. In the context of political communication, this continuous personalisation of news through recommendation systems leads to political polarisation in support of one set of ideologies, thereby curbing alternate viewpoints. Thus, when deployed in news environments, these systems do not merely recommend content but also influence exposure to political viewpoints.

Another concern related to Algorithmic opacity, which refers to the lack of transparency in how automated systems make decisions. Due to these reasons, questions about its neutrality are continuously raised. As Google Discover also works using these recommender systems, its credibility in promoting impartial news is often put in question. But before we delve deeper into the nuances of Google Discover, it is important to understand what exactly Google Discover is and how it operates.

Google Discover and the New Era of News Consumption

Google Discover is a content recommendation service that provides its users with personalised feeds of news, articles, videos, and other content. Launched in 2018, the platform has become a popular medium for news consumption over the years. Google Discover is an entirely mobile platform. Users find it primarily in the Google app or when they open a new tab in the Google Chrome app. It is designed in such a way that it first learns about its users' interests, using their search history, geographic location, and past interactions with the platforms. It then customises a set of content and displays it on the news feed of the users, which it considers to be relevant [3]. One of the crucial features of the platform is that it uses algorithms to monitor changing users' interests over time and continues to tailor content in a dynamic manner. As users engage with the content suggested to them, the behavior pattern continues to get updated based on a feedback

mechanism. However, merely clicking on articles and past search results can only offer a limited degree of personalisation. Hence, Google Discover also considers the time at which users interact with a particular kind of content to become more accurate in providing recommendations.

The algorithm that powers Google Discover is based on a machine learning technique called “reinforcement learning.” This technique allows Google Discover to learn and adapt gradually, optimizing content recommendations for each user. Reinforcement learning also involves training a machine learning model to maximize a reward signal, which, in the case of Google Discover, is users' engagement with content [4].

As a result of this micro-personalisation, the reliance of people on Google Discover has continued to increase. As of 2023, Google Discover was the source of just 37% of total traffic for the News Publishers. However, this number now stands at 67.5%, showing a significant boost.

Hence, this shift represents a new form of algorithmic agenda-setting, where platforms determine what political content users encounter. Meanwhile, concerns remain about the neutrality of the platform.

While Google claims Discover to be a totally personalized platform, the opaque nature of the algorithm prohibits users from examining if the platform's claims are true or if it uses the service to promote any specific set of news bearing any specific agenda and sentiment.

Algorithms, Sentiment, and Democratic Concerns

Democracy watchdog reports have noted a significant rise in authoritarianism across the globe, thereby causing a withering of democracy. This also applies to the United States, where concerns about democratic rights are at their peak [5]. In such a situation as this, the type of news people watch and the sentiments they bear play a crucial role in shaping the perspective about society around us. The civic engagement, drawn as a result of internet-based media, also helps in shaping public perception about politics. However, the sentiments promoted by these push-based news systems, like Google Discover, may not be neutral, thereby leading to emotional imbalance.

Studies in the past have shown that anger and emotionally-charged information spread faster than neutral information on the internet [6]. Besides, research on extreme and harmful speech further underscores the role of platforms in amplifying emotionally charged content. Udupa demonstrates how digital technologies facilitate the circulation of extreme speech by privileging content that triggers strong emotional responses, while Kumar exposes systemic inconsistencies in platform moderation, revealing how algorithmic systems often fail to address deeper structural biases embedded within content governance [4,5]. Although these studies focus on hate speech and moderation, they collectively point to a broader issue: platforms tend to prioritize engagement-driving content, frequently aligned with outrage, conflict, and negativity.

Additionally, studies examining AI-driven interventions in online discourse, such as Wu show that artificial intelligence systems are increasingly deployed to manage harmful content, yet little attention is paid to how the same AI infrastructures may themselves contribute to affective distortions in everyday political news exposure [7]. Together, these works suggest that algorithmic systems do not merely respond to social realities but actively shape them.

The reason behind this is simple. People tend to click more on content that sparks emotionally charged responses. Therefore, the CTR on news articles increases, giving increased traffic to platforms and a constant user base to these push-based platforms. Notably, certain studies in the past have claimed that Google, specifically through its Google News feature, promotes the majority of positive news. However, trends seem to be changing.

In the backdrop of a multitude of global crises, including the US's war with Iran and the previous attack on Venezuela, the amount of negative news surfacing is bound to increase.

However, this study aims to understand the sentiment promoted by Google Discover at a time when global relationships were comparatively calmer. At a time when US President Donald Trump claimed to have contributed to promoting Global peace and demanded the Nobel Peace Prize for himself, one would rightly assume that the kind of news promoted for the US audience would be positive as well, and this is the narrative that this thesis wants to investigate. While algorithmic amplification and emotional contagion have been widely studied on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, far less scholarly attention has been devoted to algorithmic news discovery platforms such as Google Discover. This dissertation addresses that gap by examining how sentiment is distributed in algorithmically curated political news feeds.

The study, hence, is essentially based on the notion that Algorithmic systems shape how politics is emotionally experienced. The study intends to investigate whether Google Discover exhibits sentiment bias in the curation of U.S. political news headlines. It also tends to examine which sentiment (positive, negative, or neutral) dominates the tone of the headlines. Further, the study also analyses the underlying biases in the way these news articles are promoted, and if additional focus is given to any specific news outlet that promotes a clear ideology, whether in favor of or against the people and party in power. Overall, the study explores how algorithmic recommendation systems shape political affect and discourse, thereby examining their neutrality and the role they play in promoting global peace and equality among nations.

To achieve this, this dissertation flows in the following order: Chapter 2 reviews literature on algorithmic personalization, platform power, and political communication to identify existing knowledge in the area.

Chapter 3 outlines the research gap, research questions, the theoretical framework, and research methodology.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the sentiment and thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings for algorithmic agenda-setting and democratic discourse, and suggests future work in which these findings can be utilised.

Review of Literature

Algorithms, Platform Power, and Personalization

The growing dominance of digital platforms has led to the increasing centrality of algorithms in structuring information flows. Far from being neutral computational tools, algorithms are now widely understood as socio-technical systems that shape visibility, relevance, and meaning within digital environments. In this regard, Tarleton Gillespie conceptualizes algorithms as key gatekeepers of public discourse, determining which content

becomes visible to users and what gets marginalised. Gillespie challenges the notion that Algorithms only shape culture from the outside and warns against reifying them as mere isolated forces. Thus, trending algorithms become a public symbol that represents collective identity. As a result, user activity is translated into visible indicators of publicity, thereby leading to the quantification of public interest.

Gillespie calls these indicators “tiny barometers of public attention.” Based on these trending interests, platforms such as Google promote news that has a high chance of being clicked, thereby leading to greater engagement. Hence, trending algorithms do not simply discover what people like, but rather calculate a public into existence, leading to what Gillespie terms “Calculated Publics.” This means that algorithms define what “we” are talking about. They create a sense of collective attention and shared culture, and users interpret trends as reflections of society's interests or concerns [8]. However, the key concern in this regard is what exactly is categorised as a trending topic. Drawing on the concept of “Matthew effect,” Gillespie argues that early popularity increases visibility, leading to more engagement. This engagement further amplifies popularity. To contextualise this in the study of Google algorithms, it can be rightly said that platforms that are more popular would gain more engagement, and the loop will continue, thereby not only opposing alternate viewpoints but also information from other sources of news, which, despite being relevant, are not given a space on Google's Discover platform, owing to limited popularity. Hence, algorithms are no longer invisible technical tools. They are public-facing cultural objects, where trending lists are shaped by how we interpret collective attention and identity. This idea of Gillespie leads us to a key question on how these trending topics are decided and whose opinions are amplified?

While different scholars have given various insights, one thing that sparks commonality is the idea that algorithms are opaque elements. Gillespie has equated them with Hieroglyphs, suggesting that the calculations that go behind categorizing something as a trending topic are hidden and complex. A key scholarship in this regard is developed by Frank Pasquale in his book “The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information.” Pasquale argues that we are living in a ‘black box society.’ This implies that the current human society is dominated by opaque, proprietary algorithms and data-mining systems that control crucial aspects of life, including money, reputation, and information, without transparency [9]. Pasquale uses the term ‘enigmatic technologies’ to highlight the lack of human control, where mysterious systems play a crucial role in information delivery. In this regard, Google Discover is no different. Users often come across sensational news stories and end up clicking on them. However, they are unaware of the reason why that particular news appeared on their customised feed. While platforms claim it to be purely based on past search results, the appearance of specific sentiment of news for the majority of users, while focusing on specific entities and promoting particular news websites, raises key questions surrounding the calculations that determine the placement of these stories. Moreover, even in the list of trending topics, the sequence determining which story to be placed at the first position and which story at the end of the list further raises questions about the neutrality of these platforms and has prompted scholars to analyse these systems in depth. However, this leads to the subsequent argument on algorithms, and one of the key questions in this regard is what leads people to trust these customised lists powered by algorithms.

A crucial justification in this context is provided by David Beer. Beer argues that algorithms possess “social power,” structuring informational hierarchies and influencing cultural production. He states that the power of algorithms is not solely located in their technical code but also in their cultural and discursive presence. He essentially draws upon the Foucauldian framework, specifically focusing on the relationship between power, knowledge, and the production of truth. Beer suggests that algorithms produce truth both through material outcomes (automated decisions) and discursive reinforcement (the perception that algorithmic systems are neutral and objective). At the same time, the term “algorithm” has become an evocative shorthand used to justify the expansion of calculative systems by projecting ideals of precision and trustworthiness onto them. This has prompted in algorithms playing a performative role in social ordering, narrowing cultural experiences and establishing norms of behavior through “hypernudges” and predictive modeling. Beer further suggests that algorithms are increasingly integrated into the “technological unconscious,” where they function as a largely unnoticed but powerful presence shaping social connections and relations [10]. Algorithms are now essential for sorting, filtering, searching, and prioritizing information in “algorithmic culture”. Hence, the algorithms are not detached technical objects; they are modeled on visions of the social world, influenced by commercial interests, and woven into everyday practices. Thus, while algorithms are not neutral technical codes, the notion of algorithms, as promoted by businesses, has created a deep-rooted impact in the minds of the users who believe that these systems are free from biases and present the reality as it is, without pondering upon the aspects of their opacity and other traits that cannot be scrutinised. Therefore, he conceptualizes algorithms as forms of social power, arguing that they do not merely organize information but actively shape social realities by influencing what becomes visible and valuable. In the context of news consumption, algorithmic personalisation replaces traditional editorial judgment with data-driven relevance, thereby redistributing gatekeeping power from journalists to platforms.

Extending this perspective, Nick Seaver emphasizes that algorithms are not purely technical systems but are shaped by human decisions, institutional priorities, and cultural assumptions embedded within their design. At the core of platform functioning are recommender systems, which rely on user data to personalize content delivery. These systems analyze behavioural signals such as clicks, search history, and engagement patterns to tailor content to individual users. However, this leads to questions on consumer privacy and the use of user data to modify and manipulate platform behaviors. At the same time, another question that arises is, if the platforms use only user data to personalise content, how is only one sentiment of news promoted every time, with only a few sources highlighted as the key contributors of information on Google Discover? While the opaque nature of algorithms restricts a detailed enquiry in this regard, Nick Seaver has adequately highlighted the role of recommender systems. Drawing on Otis Mason’s idea of animal trapping, Seaver conceptualizes algorithmic recommender systems as “traps” [11]. He aims to describe the industry-wide shift toward “hooking” users and to chart the rise of “captivation metrics”, measures of user retention and engagement.

Ultimately, Seaver provides an alternative to traditional ethical debates that rely on a strict dichotomy between freedom and coercion, suggesting instead that these systems function as pervasive cultural infrastructures. The research by Seaver shows that algorithmic recommendations have shifted away from accuracy-based metrics like RMSE toward captivation metrics such

as dwell time and daily usage, privileging prolonged engagement over faithful preference representation. Developers increasingly rely on implicit behavioral data, treating it as more truthful than explicit ratings, while recommendation systems have become an ambient infrastructure in which nearly all digital interactions are curated. Although these systems operate through forms of productive predation, extractive yet socially generative, he argues that users are not simply coerced but persuaded into participation, making the key challenge not escape but the reappropriation and reconfiguration of these systems for alternative ends. Applying this idea to the study of Google Discover, it can be argued that the aim of providing one specific set of news over the others is twofold: To promote a particular group of people, their ideologies, and interests; and to ensure high clickability based on the metrics and data of articles that have been working for the platform in the past, thus ensuring maximum profitability. However, this has a clear implication for users, as suggested by Eli Pariser.

Eli Pariser argues that personalized algorithms on search engines and social media create unique, isolated information universes for users. By prioritizing engagement over diversity, these algorithms hide conflicting viewpoints, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and weaken democratic discourse [12]. This study is extremely relevant while delving into the nuances of Google Discover as a platform. The repetition of similar kinds of news, where the key focus is a specific group of entities, leads to the shaping of narratives in favor of or against that entity. Besides, the emergence of similar themes and sentiments leads to a biased understanding of the world. In such a case as this, when only negative news is promoted, people start perceiving the world as a mean and dangerous place to live in. This may eventually benefit a specific group of people, who are in power, and use the fear of people to benefit themselves. As a result of the filter bubble, people are also unable to get rid of their existing bias and are only able to access news that conforms to their beliefs. In the case of the news media landscape, this not only benefits the original sources of the news but also the platforms that host them. Even when a situation of cognitive dissonance is created for the readers of such news, who start questioning their understanding momentarily, the repeated appearance of any specific news sentiment further leads to the strengthening of the filter bubble, leading to reluctance for the readers.

Thus, while personalization enhances user engagement, these dynamics also centralize power within platforms, enabling them to shape information exposure in ways that are not always visible to users. These concerns become particularly significant in the context of news distribution, where algorithmic systems increasingly determine what political information users encounter. While automation has made our lives relatively easier, over-reliance on these processes, even for something as crucial as the consumption of information that eventually shapes our behavior, can pose a serious threat by leading to homogenous information systems. While these frameworks establish the structural and epistemic power of algorithms, it becomes equally important to examine how such systems shape not just information visibility but also the emotional tone of political communication.

Algorithmic News Distribution and Google Discover

The rise of algorithmic systems has fundamentally transformed the distribution of news, shifting control from traditional editorial institutions to digital platforms. This has not only changed the way news is curated, but also how it is consumed and the reliance of consumers excessively on algorithms and AI-driven technologies. In his study, Pablo J. Boczkowski highlights that people, especially

young adults, primarily acquire news through a phenomenon he labels “incidental news.” By interviewing individuals aged 18 to 29 in Argentina, Boczkowski finds that news is rarely sought out intentionally but is instead encountered passively while users navigate social media on mobile devices. This shift represents a major departure from the structured routines of print and broadcast media, as news now blends seamlessly with entertainment and personal posts. Consequently, young consumers often engage with headlines sporadically and superficially, prioritizing social platform connectivity over deep journalistic involvement (Boczkowski et al., 2019). This new digital ecology challenges traditional editorial models and weakens the historic agenda-setting power of established news organizations.

Algorithms facilitate a mode of consumption where users “encounter” news as a derivative of being on a platform for other reasons, rather than visiting a specific news site. Additionally, the “always-on” nature of mobile devices ensures that algorithmically curated content is available during any “second to spare,” leading to news being interspersed throughout the day. Hence, Algorithms often treat professional news reports, social updates from friends, and entertainment content as part of a single, flat “maelstrom” or feed. This erasure of distinction means the news report loses its significance as a “unique entity” or an “authoritative rendition” of events, as it is presented alongside funny videos or vacation photos. This is completely different from how traditional news consumption appeared. Traditional news consumption often involved a planned, habitual “first visit” to a newspaper or broadcast. Algorithmic feeds replace this with fragmented, unroutinized encounters that happen “everywhere and nowhere in particular”. The prevalence of incidental news suggests the “demise of a privileged place of news” in the broader informational hierarchy of young consumers’ lives. Thus, Traditional editorial gatekeeping is being replaced by a combination of friendship networks and platform algorithms.

This phenomenon further forces us to dive into the question of how active people are while consuming news. People usually consume whatever news pops up in their feed rather than diving deep by incorporating media literacy tools. Thus, the target of platforms is to gain maximum clicks through the news that is shown firsthand in their feeds. To achieve this, a huge amount of negative or sensational news is promoted on these platforms that automatically garners the “incidental” attention of people, and they end up consuming it.

Continuing further on similar scholarships, Nicholas Diakopoulos highlights how computational systems now influence news visibility, reshaping journalistic practices and audience exposure. In the era of algorithmic media, news distribution is increasingly mediated by algorithmic gatekeepers like Google and Facebook, which together direct approximately 70% of external traffic to news websites. These platforms utilize complex curation algorithms to surface, filter, and prioritize information, effectively acting as “digital paperboys” that determine which civic stories reach a critical mass. Research into Google’s news distribution, specifically through features like “Top Stories”, indicates a significant concentration of attention; for instance, a 24-hour study on the topic of “tax reform” found that just five unique sources accounted for nearly 93% of all links presented to users. Furthermore, the broad definition of “news” used by these algorithms can sometimes elevate state-sponsored media or unvetted social content, raising concerns about the diversity and quality of information served to the public.

To remain viable in this environment, news organizations have moved toward content optimization, using algorithms for A/B testing headlines and predicting article shelf-life to align with platform mandates. However, as platforms frequently shift their internal logic—such as prioritizing “friends and family” over professional news, publishers face a precarious distribution landscape. In response, some media outlets are asserting control by developing “journalistic newsfeeds” on their own platforms. These systems attempt to reconcile commercial metrics with editorial values, using metadata such as “news value” and “civic importance” to ensure that personalized recommendations do not obscure hard news stories essential for an informed citizenry [13]. This evolution suggests a shift from purely engagement-driven distribution toward a hybrid model where human editorial judgment is encoded into the curation process to mitigate the limitations of purely quantitative algorithmic decisions.

In the guise of such a system, platforms such as Google Discover often promote news that is claimed to have been customised, but they rather promote so-called “news values” that align with the agenda of people in power. What is more concerning is the fact that the sentiment of such news also remains similar over the period of time, and thus the overall negativity level keeps on amplifying rather than sticking to the journalistic ethic of providing objective and neutral news.

However, despite extensive research on algorithmic news distribution and social media platforms, relatively limited scholarly attention has been paid to Google Discover as a distinct site of algorithmic news curation. This gap becomes particularly important when considering how such platforms may shape not only information exposure but also the emotional tone of political content.

Negativity, Outrage, and Political Communication

A growing body of research suggests that digital platforms tend to amplify emotionally charged content, particularly negativity, outrage, and conflict. William J. Brady demonstrates that moral-emotional content spreads more rapidly online, highlighting the central role of emotion in driving engagement [11]. In his work, Brady highlights how political debate concerning moralized issues is increasingly common in online social networks. Furthermore, moral-emotional language increased diffusion more strongly within liberal and conservative networks, and less between them. His work also highlights the importance of emotion in the social transmission of moral ideas and demonstrates the utility of social network methods for studying morality. These findings offer insights into how people are exposed to moral and political ideas through social networks, thus expanding models of social influence and group polarization as people become increasingly immersed in social media networks. In the context of Google Discover, emotionally charged information that promotes regional sentiments, such as that of nationalistic values for British citizens, or pro-religious messages for Indian citizens, is bound to get more views and the attention of people. Hence, instead of only promoting news based on the search habits of people, the platform promotes news that can charge users on the basis of their emotional leanings. This further puts them in a spiral of a similar kind and sentiments of news, without deviating to ensure maximum platform profitability. This not only drives engagement but also creates a loop for users to read only one kind of news and thus becomes a point of debate, especially in cases of political communication, as it leads to the propagation of only majority ideologies, thereby helping people in power and opposing alternative viewpoints and sentiments.

Similarly, Sahana Udupa argues that digital platforms facilitate the circulation of extreme speech by privileging content that evokes strong emotional reactions, as seen in contexts such as India and Myanmar [4]. However, she highlights that such trends inhibit the growth of an open, safe, and accountable internet due to the spread of online vitriol and the challenges it poses to human rights. She seeks to move beyond “technological solutionism” and “moral panics” by recommending sustainable communities of practice at global, national, bilateral, and community levels. Such systems further lead to global unevenness in platform governance. This not only causes a sentiment-bias on platforms but also leads to the rise of hatred amongst people and against minority communities, based on caste, ethnicity, gender, race, etc. She suggests that effective intervention requires a mix of five action frames: Intermediation, Policy Pressure, Connection, Monitoring, and Training/Awareness. She also focuses on the use of AI to counter hate speech, but also notes that AI systems lack detailed cultural knowledge, are biased, and homogeneous due to a lack of representation. Udupa's work leads us to ponder that, with AI itself being biased, the issues of false positives and overapplication exist predominantly, and this can harm the audience. Besides, if AI itself is contributing to the promotion of hate speech through these measures, rather than countering them, the reliance of the system that uses them to promote content to users further comes under scrutiny. Algorithms, in this regard, become a site of debate, and Google Discover, which thrives on them, raises further questions about its objectivity. These dynamics suggest that algorithmic systems may indirectly prioritize outrage-driven content, as such content generates higher engagement signals. In fact, studies have shown how platforms remain biased towards content that generates outrage.

Kumar identifies inconsistencies in content moderation systems. In his study of Facebook and Twitter, Kumar has found a series of issues with platforms that promote caste-based hatred [5]. He highlights that in the case of countries like India, Upper-caste digital communities often reproduce offline hierarchies by mocking Dalit “merit” and reinforcing exclusion, while platform responses have lagged behind the scale of the problem, despite affecting nearly one-fifth of the global population. Caste was recognized as a protected category by Facebook only in 2018 and by Twitter (X) in 2020. However, despite several complaints by people against posts that promote caste-based hatred, the amount of content that has been actually taken down remains extremely low. Kumar's work, thus, exposes systemic failures in platform moderation, including metric deception, where Facebook's public claims of high hate-speech removal obscure internal evidence showing minimal actual takedowns. It highlights Facebook's inconsistent and non-reproducible caste reporting workflows, Twitter's narrow categorization of caste only under dehumanization, and broader limitations of AI moderation systems that fail to grasp the cultural specificity of caste while reproducing annotator biases. As a result, the vast majority of reported casteist content remains visible, underscoring the ineffectiveness of current governance mechanisms in protecting caste-oppressed communities. While in the context of the United States, the problem of caste remains absent, similar trends can be seen where people of color are targeted in online communities, and despite repeated reports, such posts are rarely blocked by platforms. Although Kumar's work focuses only on social media platforms, the role of algorithms cannot be ignored. Since Google Discover also works using similar tools, the risk level remains equally applicable on this platform as well, where sentiment bias leads to heightened threats against specific groups of people.

On a similar note, other scholars have also analysed the growing role of AI in managing online discourse, raising questions about algorithmic influence on emotional expression. Social media's anonymity has enabled widespread hate speech and verbal abuse, posing serious risks to social cohesion and users' psychological well-being. Existing moderation systems relying on user reports and human reviewers suffer from inefficiency, bias, high error rates, and emotional harm to moderators. While counterspeech offers a non-censorial way to challenge hate and support victims, its manual practice is labor-intensive and emotionally taxing. As a result, advances in LLMs enable automated, personalized counterspeech, yet their real-world effectiveness in promoting meaningful user engagement remains underexplored. While the presence of counterspeech significantly increased users' willingness to engage against hate compared to no counterspeech, with AI-generated responses proving at least as effective as human ones, engagement declined sharply when the AI's identity was disclosed, indicating a disclosure penalty driven by skepticism toward algorithmic content [6]. Hence, at times when algorithms are used to counter hate speech, there are significant challenges related to their usability. Thus, reliance of Google Discover on such systems creates widespread challenges in the objective and neutral propagation of news to its readers. Since algorithms are based on the social structures of society and take data from within society, they not only shapes itself, but society in general, creating an “algorithmic culture.” Hence, when Google Discover uses algorithms to promote news bearing only one kind of sentiment, the society is shaped to conform to those sentiments, even in its day-to-day activities. Together, these studies highlight the emergence of affective publics, where emotional intensity becomes central to political communication.

Algorithms, Sentiment, and Democratic Implications

The increasing influence of algorithmic systems on information exposure has raised significant concerns about their implications for democratic processes. Reports from the Varieties of Democracy Institute highlight a global decline in democratic quality, characterized by rising polarization and reduced trust in institutions. Countries around the globe are witnessing a rise in authoritarianism, with aspects of human rights often neglected and ignored. This trend is not only witnessed in the developing regions of the world but also in the most developed regions, including the United States. In such a situation as this, what is required is the promotion of news that can give multiple perspectives to people. However, when platforms like Google Discover promote only a specific section of society, the chances of political inequalities increase. In this regard, works of scholars like Ruha Benjamin play a pivotal role.

Benjamin argues that algorithmic systems can reproduce and reinforce existing social inequalities under the guise of neutrality, shaping public discourse in subtle but powerful ways. She argues that algorithmic codes do not marginalise groups because of glitches or errors, but because they are shaped by people who are already biased. Benjamin introduces the concept of New Jim Code, which is defined as the employment of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing racial hierarchies while appearing objective or progressive. Benjamin argues that race itself functions as a technology, a tool designed to separate, stratify, and justify social injustice as part of the architecture of everyday life. These technical fixes often mask or even accelerate discrimination, creating a digital caste system that limits the life chances of marginalized groups under the guise of efficiency and progress [12].

Benjamin details how inequity is engineered and how discrimination becomes a default setting in technological design when developers ignore social and historical contexts. She uses examples like the Beauty AI contest, where machine learning algorithms trained on biased datasets overwhelmingly favored White contestants, to demonstrate that “deep learning” often mirrors human prejudice. She further highlighted the example of the California Gang database, where 87% people listed as gang members by algorithms were Black or Latino. In fact, babies under 1 year old were also labeled as “gang members.” Thus, normal names were the ones that sounded white. These names were given privilege in legal matters, job applications, and in other social avenues. This engineered inequity is further evident in predictive policing and automated risk assessments, where data drawn from over-policed neighborhoods is used to justify further surveillance, effectively creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of criminality. Benjamin posits that such technical “glitches” are not accidental errors but signals of a corrupt system that ignores historical context and replicates social cleavages.

She also delves into coded exposure, a phenomenon where certain groups are both hyper-surveilled and simultaneously invisible to technology. This is historically rooted in technologies like Kodak's Shirley cards, which used White skin as the norm for film exposure, causing darker skin to be routinely underexposed. In the modern era, this persists in facial recognition software that is less accurate for Black faces yet more frequently used in police databases to target Black communities. Furthermore, Benjamin critiques technological benevolence, where solutions like electronic monitoring are marketed as humane alternatives to prison but actually expand carceral control into the most intimate parts of life while generating profit for private firms. In the context of news delivery, stories promoting white lives and criminalising people who are Black or Latino in the US political context further reinforce these inequalities, leading to an unjust society. Hence, if Google Discover promotes only a set of people, their political representation would be strengthened compared to those who are either absent from algorithmic representations or portrayed negatively by these systems. Hence, exposure to negatively framed political content may contribute to political cynicism, disengagement, and polarization.

While prior research has examined sentiment and bias in social media contexts, limited attention has been paid to sentiment patterns within algorithmically curated news platforms.

Sentiment analysis provides a useful methodological approach to examine the emotional tone of political content at scale. Therefore, this study builds on these insights to examine whether Google Discover exhibits systematic sentiment bias in the curation of U.S. political news.

Methodology

The chapter titled Methodology outlines the research design and methodological approach adopted to examine sentiment bias in U.S. political news coverage on Google Discover. Building on the theoretical foundations discussed in the previous chapter, the study employs a mixed analytical framework combining thematic categorization and sentiment analysis to investigate patterns in algorithmically curated news content. Given the opaque nature of platform algorithms, an empirical, data-driven approach is necessary to understand how content is selected and presented to users.

This chapter delves into the research gap that exists despite the present scholarship in this area of research and the questions that

needs to be addressed. Further, the chapter details the processes of data collection, sampling strategy and coding framework, while also addressing the methods of analysis of the data collected.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on key theoretical perspectives to examine how algorithmically curated platforms shape political information exposure and its emotional framing. With the rise of personalized recommendation systems, traditional editorial gatekeeping is increasingly replaced by algorithmic curation. To analyze these dynamics, the study employs the frameworks of networked agenda-setting, filter bubble, and platform power, which together help explain how visibility, personalization, and control operate within digital news environments.

Network Agenda Setting

Often referred to as the third level of agenda-setting theory, Network Agenda Setting is conceptualised by Lei Guo and Maxwell McCombs. The theory proposes that media not only tell the public what to think about and how to think about it, but also how different issues or attributes are connected to each other in their minds. This implies that media do not transfer attributes in isolation; they transfer them as an integrated, networked picture. For example, if the media frequently mentions “economic crisis” alongside “war” the public will likely associate these two in their minds. This concept argues that public perception is a network-like structure rather than a linear list of issues. In algorithmically curated environments like Google Discover, agenda-setting is no longer driven solely by editorial decisions but by algorithmic selection and ranking systems. This study extends this idea by examining whether such systems also influence the sentiment orientation of political content, thereby contributing to a form of algorithmic agenda-setting.

Filter Bubble Effect

Developed by Eli Pariser, the filter bubble concept refers to a state of intellectual isolation resulting from personalized algorithmic curation, where search engines and social media platforms predict and prioritize content based on a user's past behavior, click history, and location. This mechanism functions as an implicit, often invisible, gatekeeper that limits exposure to diverse viewpoints or contrary information, effectively restricting the user to a personalized ecosystem of familiar ideas. While intended to enhance relevance, this algorithmic filtering can lead to “informational embubblement,” strengthening confirmation bias and potentially enhancing political or ideological polarization. This causes extreme polarisation in the case of political communication and has widespread implications for the audience. On platforms like Google Discover, personalization may lead to repeated exposure to similar types of political content, not only in terms of topics but also in terms of emotional tone. This suggests that users may be systematically exposed to similar sentiments (e.g., negativity or outrage), reinforcing biased perceptions of political reality.

Platform Power

José van Dijck, David Nieborg, and Thomas Poell have worked extensively to develop the concept of platform power. Contemporary platform power theory argues for a radical reframing of digital dominance, shifting from a narrow focus on economic market competition and consumer welfare toward a broader understanding of socio-technical and political-economic relations. This framework proposes three essential paradigmatic shifts: moving from “consumer welfare” to citizen well-being, viewing individual firms as part of an integrated platform

ecosystem, and recognizing platforms as societal infrastructures rather than mere level playing fields. Central to this theory is the power exerted by platforms through mechanisms of datafication and algorithmic governance, which allow a “corporate platform elite” to control critical “nodal” functions, such as search engines, app stores, and cloud services, upon which users, complementors, and even democratic processes have become fundamentally dependent. Thus, algorithms and data become custodians of human behavior and their understanding of society at large. Situating this concept in this study, Google, being a significant intermediary, exercises significant influence over news distribution through its recommendation systems.

Hence, this study examines whether such power leads to the preferential amplification of certain political actors, groups, or news sources, thereby shaping representation within political discourse.

Research Gap

Existing scholarship on algorithms and political communication has extensively examined search engines, social media platforms, misinformation, and ideological polarization. Studies have also highlighted the role of algorithmic systems in shaping information visibility, reinforcing filter bubbles, and amplifying emotionally charged content. However, despite these research projects, limited attention has been paid to Google Discover as a distinct site of algorithmic news curation, particularly in contrast to search-based or social media-driven information environments.

Furthermore, while prior research has explored bias primarily through ideological framing, misinformation, or platform governance, comparatively little focus has been placed on sentiment and affective framing as a dimension of algorithmic influence. Existing studies on outrage, moral-emotional content, and extreme speech suggest that platforms tend to privilege engagement-driven, emotionally charged content, yet there remains a lack of evidence-based research examining whether such dynamics translate into systematic sentiment bias in news recommendation systems.

In addition, limited attention has been given to whether algorithmic curation may disproportionately amplify specific political actors, groups, or ideologies, thereby shaping not only the tone but also the representational balance of political news exposure. This raises critical questions about the potential concentration of visibility and the reinforcement of particular narratives within personalized news environments.

In particular, the role of algorithmic personalization in shaping not just what political information users encounter, but how it is emotionally framed, remains underexplored. This gap is especially significant in the context of push-based platforms like Google Discover, where users passively receive curated content rather than actively seeking it.

Hence, this study addresses these gaps by examining sentiment bias as a form of algorithmic agenda-setting, focusing on how Google Discover curates U.S. political news headlines, whether negative or outrage-driven content is disproportionately amplified, and whether certain political actors or groups receive greater visibility within these personalized feeds.

Problem Statement

Algorithmically curated news platforms have become central to contemporary political communication. Google Discover, in particular, functions as a personalized, push-based news

recommendation system that determines the visibility and prominence of political content for users. While the platform is positioned as neutral and interest-driven, its content curation is governed by opaque algorithmic processes that prioritize engagement and relevance. The emotional tone of political news, especially the amplification of negative or outrage-oriented framing, has significant implications for public perception, political trust, and democratic discourse, as it can lead to bias in favor of certain political groups over others. Despite the growing influence of Google Discover as a news gateway, there is limited empirical research examining whether its personalization algorithms systematically privilege negative sentiment in political coverage. This lack of scholarly attention creates a critical gap in understanding how algorithmic systems may shape political realities through affective bias rather than overt ideological positioning.

Aims of the Research

This study aims to examine how algorithmically curated platforms shape the emotional and informational landscape of political news consumption. Specifically, it intends to:

- Identify the overall sentiment distribution (positive, negative, neutral) of U.S. political news headlines on Google Discover
- Examine whether Google Discover shows a bias toward negative or negative-leaning political content
- Understand how sentiment patterns can be explained using algorithmic agenda-setting, platform power, and personalization
- Analyse whether specific political actors, groups, or viewpoints are disproportionately promoted
- Identify the sources of news most frequently appearing on Google Discover

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the overall sentiment distribution of U.S. political news headlines surfaced on Google Discover, and to what extent does Google Discover exhibit a systematic bias toward negative or negative-leaning political content?

RQ2: How can observed patterns of sentiment distribution be explained through the frameworks of algorithmic agenda-setting, platform power, and personalization?

RQ3: To what extent does Google Discover amplify specific political actors, groups, or news sources within its U.S. political coverage?

Research Design

This study adopts a multi-step mixed-methods content analysis approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to examine political news headlines surfaced on Google Discover. To support this mixed-methods design, the study is grounded in a pragmatist epistemological approach, which prioritizes research questions and practical research over strict

adherence to a single methodological framework. Pragmatism allows for the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods, recognising that different forms of data can provide complementary and in-depth insights into complex social phenomena. As argued by John W. Creswell, mixed-methods research enables a more comprehensive understanding by combining numerical measurement with contextual interpretation [13]. Similarly, Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie highlight that mixed-methods approaches are particularly effective in studies that seek to explore both patterns and meanings within data [14]. In the context of this research, the quantitative sentiment analysis provides measurable evidence of sentiment distribution, while

the qualitative thematic analysis enables a deeper exploration of framing patterns and narrative structures. Thus, the integration of these approaches aligns with a pragmatist epistemology that values methodological pluralism and enhances the overall validity of the findings.

The research begins with the use of a data monitoring tool to systematically extract relevant news stories appearing on the platform within the defined study period.

In the first stage of analysis, a computational sentiment analysis is conducted to classify headlines into sentiment categories, thus enabling a quantitative assessment of sentiment distribution. This is followed by a thematic analysis of headline content, which is used to identify recurring framing patterns and narrative structures within political news coverage.

This sequential design allows for both statistical measurement of sentiment trends and interpretive analysis of textual meaning, making it suitable for systematically evaluating large datasets of news headlines and identifying underlying patterns of sentiment orientation and potential bias in algorithmically curated political content.

Data Collection

Political news headlines surfaced on Google Discover are identified using Marfeel's Discover monitoring tool, which tracks content ranking within Google Discover feeds in the month of November. This month is chosen because Google rolled out its core update in December and March, and the results have not been uniform since November. This is also because, until October 2025, US President Donald Trump heavily promoted himself as a promoter of peace.

Hence, the study aims to analyse if similar positive sentiments are also visible on Google Discover. Thus, the data includes the viewership until 2nd December, 2025. Sentiment analysis is then conducted using Google's Natural Language Processing sentiment analysis tool, classifying headlines as positive, negative, or neutral. Neutral headlines are further examined for sentiment leaning to capture subtle affective bias. Further, a thematic analysis of these headlines is carried out to identify recurring patterns in headlines.

Data Analysis

The analysis of collected political news headlines follows a multi-layered approach combining computational and qualitative techniques to assess sentiment orientation and thematic framing within Google Discover content.

In the first stage, all extracted headlines are processed using Google Cloud Natural Language Processing (NLP) sentiment analysis tool, which incorporates Google's built-in `analyzeSentiment` method. This method is primarily a part of the Google Cloud Natural Language API, which uses advanced machine learning to inspect text and identify the prevailing emotional opinion. The API uses pre-trained machine learning models, including techniques based on BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers), to understand context, sentence structure, and nuance rather than just matching keywords. Before analyzing, the system breaks text into tokens (words) and converts them into roots (Google Cloud, n.d.).

This computational method assigns each headline a sentiment score and classifies it into three categories: positive, negative, or neutral. Headlines with a sentiment score greater than +0.25 were

classified as positive, those with scores ranging between -0.25 and +0.25 were considered neutral, and those with scores below -0.25 were classified as negative. This allows for an initial quantitative assessment of overall sentiment distribution within the dataset.

Following this, neutral headlines are subjected to a secondary interpretive review to identify potential sentiment leaning. In cases where neutral headlines exhibited a clear directional tone upon review, they were reclassified into sub-categories such as "slight negative" or "slight positive." This step is undertaken to capture subtle affective bias that may not be fully reflected in automated classification scores, thereby refining the accuracy of sentiment categorisation.

In the second stage of analysis, a thematic analysis of all headlines is conducted to identify recurring narrative structures, framing devices, and discursive patterns in political reporting on Google Discover, using a detailed coding sheet. This involves systematic coding of headline content to extract dominant themes related to political actors, events, and evaluative tone. The coded headlines were grouped into three broad analytical categories, including Political Power and Governance; Conflict, Crisis, and Security; and Electoral Politics and Public Perception. Finally, the results from sentiment classification and thematic coding are integrated to examine relationships between sentiment orientation and thematic framing.

Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of 98 U.S. political news headlines surfaced on Google Discover. After careful extraction of the data using Marfeel software, the data was analyzed using sentiment classification and thematic categorization to identify patterns in both emotional tone and issue representation.

The headlines were then grouped into three broad thematic categories: Political Power and Governance, Conflict, Crisis, and Security, and Electoral Politics and Public Perception. This classification enables a structured examination of how different political domains are represented within algorithmically curated news feeds, while also giving the scope of analysis of different themes and the kind of sentiments they bear.

The analysis focuses on two key dimensions: (1) sentiment distribution across themes, and (2) patterns of visibility in terms of recurring actors, issues, and sources. The analysis also aims to examine the sources that were given more visibility by taking into account the impressions of the articles as extracted from Marfeel. It also highlights whether Google Discover equally promotes various political groups and actors or highlights the superiority of one group, thereby marginalising the other.

Overall, the findings indicate a strong dominance of negative and negative-leaning content across categories, suggesting the presence of sentiment bias in algorithmic news curation. A detailed analysis of these sentiments is presented below.

Prominence of Negative and Negative-Leaning Sentiments on Google Discover

The sentiment classification presented in this section is based on scores generated using Google's Natural Language Processing sentiment analysis tool, as detailed in Chapter 3. This tool provides a polarity score to each headline and helps in the easy identification of the prevailing sentiment, thus dividing them into positive,

negative, or neutral. Once the headlines that appeared on Google Discover during the period of study were extracted, they were placed on this tool to extract their sentiments. Out of the unit of analysis, where $n=98$, the dominance of negative-leaning articles was the most. The first round of analysis revealed the presence of explicitly negative sentiment in 63 articles, thereby accounting for $\approx 64\%$ of the total articles. Neutral sentiments were present in 30 articles, thereby accounting for $\approx 31\%$ of the data set, while explicitly positive sentiments were seen only in 5 articles, making up for $\approx 5\%$ of the data set. This data was then processed through a second round of analysis to understand the leanings of the neutral articles.

To achieve this, neutral headlines positing a negative score, between the range of (0 to -0.25), were flagged as Slight Negative, while those in the score range of (0 to +0.25) were flagged as Slight Positive. For example, the headline, "A mother was taken into custody by ICE. Then the public learned of her family tie to the White House," with a sentiment score of -0.152, was categorised as Slight Negative, while the headline, "Bipartisan push for congressional term limits gains momentum amid Greene's resignation," with a sentiment score of 0.05, was categorised as Slight Positive. This categorisation helped in the detailed analysis of the neutral articles to further explore patterns of negativity within the data sets. Out of the 30 neutral articles extracted as part of the first round of analysis, 21 were found to bear the characteristics of Slight negative sentiment, while only 9 were found to be positive-leaning or slightly positive. Hence, the overall negative sentiment, including a combination of Negative and Slight Negative headlines, accounted for $\approx 86\%$ of the total data set, while Positive sentiment, which includes Slight positive headlines, is present only in $\approx 14\%$ a portion of the total dataset.

The overall viewership of these headlines accounted for 31.39 million. This is not necessarily the number of times the articles were clicked, but rather the number of times a user saw the articles in their Google Discover feed. Out of this, the viewership of explicitly negative content was ≈ 23.95 million, for Slight Negative content was ≈ 4.46 million, for Slight Positive Content was ≈ 2.11 million, and explicitly Positive content was ≈ 0.87 million. For example, an article titled, "Germany Unites with Italy, Turkey, China, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, And More as Canada Strengthens Travel Advisory Due To Escalating Security Threats, Protests, And Border Control Measures," had a viewership of 3.19 million and was flagged Negative on the Sentiment score. On the contrary, the maximum viewership gained by a title, flagged Positive on the sentiment scale, titled "Congressmen introduce bipartisan bill to protect Obamacare tax credits," was just 298.2K. This highlights how headlines with negative sentiments are often promoted more and garner more viewers as compared to articles bearing positive sentiments. A clear table of these findings is presented below. This distinction is crucial, as higher viewership does not necessarily reflect user preference alone but also indicates repeated exposure within the feed, suggesting that algorithmic systems play a significant role in amplifying certain types of content over others.

Table 1: Overall Sentiment Pattern and Viewership on 98 Headlines

Sl. No.	Sentiment Category	Number of Articles	Total Viewership (adjusted)
1.	Negative	63	23.95M
2.	Positive	05	0.87M
3.	Slight Negative	21	4.46M
4.	Slight Positive	09	2.11M

These findings indicate a clear dominance of negative and negative-leaning sentiment within the dataset. Even when headlines are initially classified as neutral, a substantial proportion tends to lean toward negativity, suggesting that the absence of explicitly negative language does not necessarily imply neutrality in tone. This pattern highlights the prevalence of subtly negative framing in political news, where headlines may avoid overtly critical language while still conveying adverse or conflict-driven narratives. As a result, users encountering such content are more likely to be exposed to a consistently negative emotional tone, even in cases where the sentiment is not immediately apparent. The two-stage classification approach enables a more refined understanding of sentiment distribution by capturing underlying tonal tendencies that may be overlooked in conventional three-category sentiment analysis. This further highlights the role of power in shaping the understanding of society and how algorithms are replacing traditional gatekeeping to promote news of a specific sentiment to a wide number of users, which will be discussed deeply in the next chapter.

A closer look at the headlines and the language used in the framing of these headlines highlight overuse of adjectives or words that can trigger negative sentiments. Use of terms like "fraudster," "top adviser," "banned," "tensions," "terror," etc., often trigger negative sentiments and are flagged by Google's API systems. This pattern reflects a broader shift from informational neutrality to affective prioritisation, where the emotional tone of content becomes a key determinant of its visibility within algorithmically curated environments.

While these findings establish the overall dominance of negative sentiment, it is important to examine how such patterns are distributed across different types of political content. The following sections, therefore, analyze sentiment trends within specific thematic categories to identify variations in tone and emphasis.

Thematic Analysis

To move beyond overall sentiment distribution, the study employs thematic analysis to examine how sentiment patterns vary across different types of political content. The dataset was categorized into three themes: Political Power and Governance, Conflict, Crisis, and Security, and Electoral Politics and Public Perception. This classification allows for a more nuanced understanding of how emotional tone is distributed within specific political contexts rather than being treated as a uniform phenomenon. By analyzing sentiment within each theme, the study seeks to identify patterns in framing, recurring narratives, and variations in tone across categories, thereby providing a deeper insight into the structure of algorithmically curated political news.

Political Power & Governance

The theme of Political Power and Governance encompasses news related to government functioning, policy decisions, leadership actions, and institutional performance. As a core component of political communication, this category plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of authority, accountability, and state effectiveness. News within this domain often reflects narratives of policy success, administrative control, or governance failures. Given its close association with leadership evaluation, this category is particularly susceptible to critical and negative framing. Analyzing this theme allows for an understanding of how algorithmic curation presents political authority to users, and whether governance is framed through stability or dysfunction. This theme highlights news around how political entities use power to make any particular decision, such as the cancellation of executive orders or determining the restrictions on people (e.g., migrants). In the context of the American Political News coverage, this includes news around President Donald Trump, the mayors of various regions, and the opposition. Out of the 98 articles that were extracted from Google Discover, 34 articles can be placed in this category. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

- Secy. Noem made final call on deportation flights, says DOJ
- Australia Sen. Pauline Hanson barred from Parliament for wearing burqa in protest
- Johnson tells Trump administration House Republicans don't want to extend ACA subsidies, sources say
- NYC Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani requests resignations from 179 Eric Adams staffers
- Income taxes could be eliminated soon due to tariffs, Trump says

Out of the 34 headlines, 20 headlines highlighted an explicit negative sentiment with an overall viewership of 7.61 million. Slight negative sentiments, on the other hand, were found across 9 articles, with a viewership of 1.79 million. Hence, the total combined negative and slight negative sentiments were found across $\approx 85\%$ of the total headlines under the theme of political power and governance. Meanwhile, positive sentiments were present only in 2 articles, while slight positive sentiments were seen only in 3 articles, with a viewership of 0.46 million and 0.45 million, respectively.

Table 2: Sentiment Pattern and Viewership on 34 Headlines Under the Theme Political Power & Governance

Sl. No.	Sentiment Category	Number of Articles	Total Viewership (adjusted)
5.	Negative	20	7.61M
6.	Positive	02	0.46M
7.	Slight Negative	09	1.79M
8.	Slight Positive	03	0.45M

Leadership figures, particularly President Donald Trump, appear prominently within this category. However, their representation is often embedded within critical or controversial contexts, such as policy disputes or institutional tensions. This indicates that algorithmically surfaced content may privilege narratives that scrutinize leadership actions rather than highlighting administrative stability or policy success. However, these headlines highlight the authoritative power of President Trump, rather than critically evaluating his policies. For example, Trump's decision to cancel executive orders signed by former President Joe Biden using an

autopen was promoted multiple times, which were covered by various news outlets.

Furthermore, in addition to numerical dominance, negative and slightly negative headlines also account for a disproportionately high share of total viewership within this category. This suggests that governance-related negativity is not only more frequent but also more visible, increasing the likelihood of repeated exposure for users. As a result, users may encounter political authority primarily through critical or conflict-driven narratives.

While positive developments, or headlines that aim to protect the interests of people, are reported, they either get comparatively lesser visibility or are very scanty in numbers. For example, the headline titled, "Congressmen introduce bipartisan bill to protect Obamacare tax credits" has a viewership of 298.29K. Thus, the limited presence of positive and slightly positive headlines indicates that narratives emphasizing policy success or effective governance receive comparatively less prominence. Even when positive developments are reported, they appear to attract significantly lower visibility, suggesting a potential imbalance in how governance is portrayed within the feed. This also raises scrutiny over the algorithmic impartiality. This is because news stories with significantly lesser viewership bearing a negative sentiment are promoted more often than stories bearing positive sentiments.

A closer examination of the negative and slightly negative headlines within this category reveals that negativity is not uniform but operates through distinct sub-patterns of governance representation. One prominent form is policy-driven negativity, where administrative decisions such as deportation measures, taxation policies, or legislative disagreements are framed through consequences, restrictions, or public backlash. Headlines referring to individuals being "taken into custody," policy reversals, or proposed economic shifts construct governance as a site of disruption rather than stability. A second pattern emerges in the form of institutional and administrative conflict, where disagreements between political actors, mass resignations, or tensions between different branches of government are highlighted. These narratives position governance within a framework of contestation and instability, rather than coordination and effectiveness.

Additionally, a significant portion of negativity is embedded within authority-centric framing, where leadership actions are presented in ways that emphasize control, enforcement, or unilateral decision-making. Even in cases where policies are not explicitly criticised, the language used often conveys a sense of imposition or rigidity, thereby subtly shaping user perception of governance as restrictive or top-down. This suggests that negativity is not always expressed through direct criticism but is frequently constructed through the framing of power and decision-making processes.

The linguistic construction of these headlines further reinforces this pattern. Words such as "barred," "deportation," "resignations," and "custody" carry inherently strong connotations of control, exclusion, and conflict. Such terminology contributes to an affective framing where governance is associated with tension and enforcement rather than facilitation or public service. This aligns with the broader tendency of digital news environments to privilege emotionally charged language that captures user attention.

Taken together, these patterns indicate that the prominence of negative sentiment within this category is not merely a numerical outcome but a structured representation shaped through recurring narratives and linguistic choices. As a result, users encountering governance-related content are more likely to engage with political authority through frames of conflict, restriction, dominance of one political group over the other, and institutional strain, thereby reinforcing a particular understanding of how power operates within the political sphere.

Overall, the Political Power and Governance category demonstrates a clear tendency toward negative framing, both in terms of frequency and visibility, suggesting that political authority is predominantly encountered through narratives of criticism, disruption, and institutional tension.

Conflict, Crisis & Security

The theme of Conflict, Crisis, and Security includes news related to wars, geopolitical tensions, internal conflicts, and national security concerns. This category represents moments of instability and heightened political tension, which are often communicated through emotionally charged narratives. Given that crisis-driven content tends to attract higher user engagement, it is likely to be amplified within algorithmically curated platforms. As a result, this theme becomes crucial in examining whether Google Discover prioritizes conflict-oriented narratives and reinforces a perception of politics as inherently volatile and threatening. This theme highlights how the idea of war is, and conflicts are promoted through algorithms. It also highlights how citizens perceive such news and their inclination towards emotionally-charged headlines when reading about conflicts and security. Given this study is situated in the United States' Political scenario, headlines under this theme include actions taken by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, America's conflict with other countries such as Venezuela and Mexico, and statements of President Trump around global peace and conflicts. Out of the 98 articles that were extracted from Google Discover, 42 articles can be placed in this category. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

- White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt's relative detained by ICE
- Pres Trump suspends immigration applications of Afghan nationals
- Vladimir Putin doubles down on demands for Ukrainian territory ahead of talks with US
- Venezuela Bans Airlines For 'Joining US Sponsored Terror', Trump Gets Base for Anti-Maduro Ops
- National guard member Sarah Beckstrom has died after shooting in Washington DC, Trump announces

Amongst the 42 headlines that were categorised under this theme, 28 headlines highlighted an explicit negative sentiment with an overall viewership of 11.62 million. Slight negative sentiments, on the other hand, were found across 10 articles, with a viewership of 2.39 million. Therefore, the total combined negative and slight negative sentiments were found across $\approx 91\%$ of the total headlines under the theme of Conflict, Crisis, and Security. Meanwhile, positive and slightly positive sentiments were present only in 2 articles each, with a viewership of 0.27 million and 0.24 million, respectively.

Table 3: Sentiment Pattern and Viewership on 42 Headlines Under the Theme Conflict, Crisis & Security

Sl. No.	Sentiment Category	Number of Articles	Total Viewership (adjusted)
9.	Negative	28	11.62M
10.	Positive	02	0.27M
11.	Slight Negative	10	2.39M
12.	Slight Positive	02	0.24M

The above data highlights that the stories under this theme are most prominent on Google Discover. Interestingly, this data highlights that while the US president has continued to claim himself as the biggest preacher of peace, the people of the country are still inclined towards reading news stories about conflict and wars. Besides, America's statement against countries like Afghanistan, Venezuela, and Mexico around this time frame further shows that negative-leaning stories are dominant in the US political communication landscape. The dominance of negative sentiment within this category aligns with existing research on digital news consumption, which suggests that emotionally charged and negative content attracts significantly higher engagement, as highlighted in Chapter 2. Studies show that each additional negative word in a headline can increase click-through rates, indicating that users are more likely to interact with conflict-driven narratives than neutral or positive ones. Thus, the appearance of headlines bearing negative sentiment may not be incidental but rather a deliberate insertion based on past data sets, facilitated further by algorithms.

In this regard, the language used within this category further amplifies emotional intensity. Terms such as "detained," "banned," "terror," "shooting," and "bomb" carry strong affective weight, contributing to a sense of urgency and alarm. Such linguistic framing aligns with broader research suggesting that outrage-driven content generates higher interaction, as users are more likely to respond emotionally to conflict than to neutral information. Hence, this leads to an "outrage-oriented" information environment, and can cause a serious implication in people's perception of the geopolitical situations, thereby causing apprehension and fear.

A closer examination of the distribution of headlines within this category further reveals that negativity is not only dominant but also structurally embedded across different types of conflict narratives. One identifiable pattern is the prevalence of state-driven enforcement and security actions, where headlines focus on detention, bans, or suspensions. These narratives frame the state primarily as an agent of control and surveillance, thereby reinforcing an image of governance that is closely tied to restriction and authority.

A second pattern emerges in the form of geopolitical confrontation, where international relations are framed through antagonistic language. Headlines referencing tensions with countries such as Venezuela, Afghanistan, or Russia frequently emphasize conflict, escalation, or ideological opposition. This contributes to a global political imagination in which international relations are perceived less as cooperative diplomacy and more as continuous strategic rivalry.

As a result, users are repeatedly exposed to a worldview structured around division and hostility.

Additionally, there is a noticeable presence of crisis-event reporting, such as shootings or deaths, which introduces elements of shock and immediacy into the news feed. These events are often framed in a way that foregrounds tragedy and urgency, thereby intensifying emotional engagement. Even when such incidents are isolated, their repeated appearance within the feed may contribute to a cumulative perception of instability and insecurity within the political environment.

The presence of positive news around big global events under this theme highlights that there is a demand amongst citizens to know about conflict resolution. For example, 151.67K views on the headline, “Ukraine reaches “understanding” with US on peace plan as Trump says “deal may be close” | BBC News” shows that resolution and peace news gets relevant attention as well. However, the limiting of such stories by algorithms raises questions about their reliability and their role in shaping narratives around war and peace.

Overall, the Conflict, Crisis, and Security category demonstrates the highest concentration of negative sentiment across all themes, both in terms of frequency and visibility. The findings suggest that Google Discover, operated using algorithms, systematically privileges conflict-oriented narratives, reinforcing an affective landscape dominated by fear, urgency, and instability. This has important implications for how users perceive both domestic and international political realities, as repeated exposure to such content may shape long-term attitudes toward governance, security, and global relations.

Electoral Politics & Public Perception

The theme of Electoral Politics and Public Perception focuses on elections, political campaigns, public opinion, and the portrayal of political actors. This category is central to democratic processes, as it shapes how citizens perceive candidates, parties, and political legitimacy. News in this domain often combines strategic communication with public sentiment, making it a key site for both positive and negative framing. Examining this theme enables an analysis of whether algorithmic systems disproportionately highlight certain actors or narratives, thereby influencing public perception and political discourse. These headlines also highlight the implications of a decision or electoral result on democracy and can help in the polarisation of public sentiments if similar actors are promoted, while others get marginalised, thereby benefiting one group of people over the others. Out of the 98 articles that were extracted from Google Discover, 22 articles can be placed in this category. Some examples of such articles are as follows:

- One of world’s longest serving democratic leaders loses election
- Carney admits that saying “Who cares?” about Trump phone call was “poor choice of words”
- Trump’s approval rating hits second-term low as Republican support dips
- Morale has never been lower: More GOP reps reportedly plot early exits
- Trump’s pick to replace DeSantis faces a Republican pile-on in Florida

The analysis of the 22 headlines that were categorised under this theme, 15 headlines highlighted an explicit negative sentiment, with an overall viewership of 4.72 million. Slight negative sentiments, on the other hand, were found across 2 articles, with a viewership of 0.27 million. Therefore, the total combined negative and slight negative sentiments were found across $\approx 77\%$ of the

total headlines under the theme of Electoral Politics and Public Perception. Meanwhile, positive sentiments were present only in 1 article, whereas slightly positive sentiments were present in 4 articles, with a viewership of 0.14 million and 1.41 million, respectively.

Table 4: Sentiment Pattern and Viewership on 22 Headlines Under the Theme Electoral Politics & Public Perception

Sl. No.	Sentiment Category	Number of Articles	Total Viewership (adjusted)
13.	Negative	15	4.72M
14.	Positive	01	0.14M
15.	Slight Negative	02	0.27M
16.	Slight Positive	04	1.41M

The use of negative words in headlines yet again plays an important role in the promotion of negative sentiment. For example, words such as “loses,” “poor choice,” “dips,” “fading,” etc. Such linguistic framing creates a sense of urgency and panic, thereby forcing people to click on such news, and this increases the visibility. negative sentiment is reinforced through recurring representational patterns in headline construction.

A closer examination of the headlines reveals that negativity within this category operates through distinct representational patterns. One such pattern is loss-oriented framing, where electoral outcomes are presented through the lens of defeat, decline, or dissatisfaction. Headlines such as “one of the world’s longest serving democratic leaders loses election” foreground failure rather than success, thereby directing user attention toward political setbacks instead of achievements. This creates an interpretive bias where elections are understood primarily in terms of loss rather than democratic participation or renewal.

A second pattern emerges in the form of leadership scrutiny and performance decline, particularly in relation to prominent political figures. For instance, recurring references to falling approval ratings of Donald Trump or internal party dissatisfaction construct a narrative of weakening authority. At the same time, stories around the decline in health of prominent leaders, such as that of Donald Trump, have also been promoted extensively. This can have two

implications in general. While such stories build a perception of declining authority, it also helps in sympathy building, which eventually helps the leader in power. A critical analysis reflects that while headlines on Trump’s approval rating decline are getting decent viewership, there is a presence of news articles around Trump’s health decline as well. Thus, an implicit perception is promoted, thereby aiming to relate Trump’s approval rating decline to a decline in his health.

Additionally, there is evidence of intra-party conflict framing, where internal disagreements within political parties are highlighted. Headlines referring to challenges within the Republican party, or party members planning early exits, position political organizations as fragmented and unstable. This not only shifts focus away from policy debates but also reinforces an image of politics as conflict-driven and strategically fractured.

These patterns point toward a broader implication: electoral politics, as presented through algorithmically curated feeds, is

framed less as a process of democratic choice and more as a site of competition, decline, and strategic conflict. As a result, users may come to perceive elections not merely as institutional processes, but as arenas of continuous political struggle.

Overall, the Electoral Politics and Public Perception category demonstrates that negative framing extends beyond crisis-driven content into the core processes of democracy. While the intensity of negativity is lower compared to other themes, its consistent presence suggests that algorithmic curation contributes to shaping public perception through selective emphasis on loss, conflict, and leadership instability.

Dominant Sources, Entities, and Relational Framing in Google Discover

To understand the biases in the framing and promotion of headlines, it is also important to analyse which news outlets are promoted more. The source distribution reveals a hybrid visibility structure, where ABC News dominates through networked, multi-format aggregation. News covered by ABC on its own website, along with aggregation platforms like YouTube, has garnered substantial visibility, with 12 of 98 stories belonging to them. Close in contention is the Cable News Network (CNN), with 10 appearances on Google Discover. Unlike ABC News, whose strength lies in cross-platform aggregation, CNN's visibility appears to be driven more by its strong brand recognition and consistent output of high-frequency political content. Together, these patterns suggest that algorithmic curation does not operate randomly but instead privileges sources that are either highly scalable across platforms or institutionally established within the media landscape.

This pattern also reflects the underlying logic of platform-driven distribution systems, where content that is easily adaptable across formats tends to receive higher visibility.

Multi-format adaptability, such as the ability to convert written reports into video, short clips, or aggregated summaries, enhances the likelihood of repeated exposure across different entry points within the platform. As a result, sources that are structurally equipped to produce such content gain a systemic advantage. This suggests that algorithmic visibility is not solely dependent on journalistic quality, but also on the technological and infrastructural capabilities of media organisations to align with platform requirements.

Other prominent outlets, including CBS, MSNBC, Sky News, and the Associated Press, also maintain a visible presence, with 6, 5, 5, and 5 articles respectively. This distribution indicates that while visibility is somewhat concentrated among a few dominant players, it is not entirely monopolised by a single source. Instead, the algorithm appears to construct a semi-diverse but still hierarchical media environment, where a limited set of established organisations consistently receive greater exposure.

At the same time, this concentration of visibility raises important questions about representational balance. The repeated appearance of a select group of outlets suggests that alternative or less prominent sources may be comparatively underrepresented within the feed. For example, Al Jazeera has appeared only thrice, including its news coverage through YouTube. This has implications for informational diversity, as users are more likely to encounter news framed through the editorial perspectives of a limited number of organisations. Hence, there is a clear gain for news organisations that have been found to cover news with a pro-government stance in the past [15].

In terms of entity, there is a clear bias as well. The name of President Donald Trump has appeared in more than 51 of the total 98 headlines, thereby demonstrating a clear focus of news outlets on him and his activities. Biden, on the other hand, has appeared in 4 news headlines, whereas Putin has in 7 of them. Most of the headlines that have featured Trump in them reflect on the President's authoritative powers and the decisions taken by him in a geopolitical context. While there are stories that have highlighted a dip in Trump's approval rating, there are very limited (only 2 out of 98), showing a clear favor for the people in power. On the other hand, headlines where Putin is featured are usually centred around Ukraine and the implications of the war between the two countries.

The disproportionate visibility of certain political figures also indicates a shift toward personality-driven political communication within algorithmic environments. Rather than presenting politics as a system of institutions and policies, the repeated focus on specific leaders transforms political discourse into a narrative centred around individuals. This personalization of politics not only increases engagement but also simplifies complex political processes into leader-centric stories. As a result, structural issues, policy debates, and institutional dynamics may receive comparatively less attention, while individual actions and statements dominate the informational landscape.

In terms of countries, the United States is the most prominently appearing country, which can be attributed to the focus of this study, which aims to study Political communication in the United States. It is usually highlighted as extremely powerful and authoritative. On the other hand, Ukraine can be seen as a country that has been looked down on a lot. Stories suggesting Ukraine's reliance on the United States to stop the war, or Russia's dominance during the conflict, have been given more visibility on Google Discover. Other countries that have been highlighted with a comparatively negative lens are those in West Asia, such as Afghanistan, and countries that have often been targeted by the US, such as Venezuela and Mexico.

Such repeated exposure shows a bias towards the framing of the article and the headlines, which in turn shapes public perception and can lead to polarisation, thereby marginalising the challenges faced by people in war-inflicted parts of the world.

A further layer of analysis emerges through the examination of relational framing between political actors. Notably, certain combinations of global leaders are entirely absent from the dataset. For instance, Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin do not appear together in any headline, despite their central roles in global politics. Instead, the relational structure of headlines consistently pairs a dominant geopolitical actor with a comparatively weaker or subordinate entity. This is evident in recurring patterns such as the United States being framed in relation to countries like Venezuela or Mexico, and Russia being positioned against Ukraine. Such pairings construct asymmetrical power relationships, where one actor is implicitly positioned as authoritative while the other is framed as reactive, dependent, or adversarial. The absence of direct US–Russia relational framing, despite its geopolitical significance, suggests that algorithmically curated headlines may avoid complex great-power dynamics in favor of clearer, more digestible conflict narratives. This results in a simplified geopolitical imagination, where global politics is structured through binary oppositions rather than multi-layered diplomatic relationships. This also avoids claiming the dominance of Trump over Putin, or vice versa.

Consequently, users are more likely to interpret international relations through hierarchies of power and conflict, rather than through cooperation or strategic negotiation.

Taken together, the patterns of source concentration, entity prominence, and relational framing reveal that algorithmic curation operates across multiple levels of representation. It not only determines which content is shown, but also structures how political actors are positioned in relation to one another. This multi-layered influence suggests that algorithmic systems function as powerful intermediaries in shaping political reality, guiding users not just toward certain topics, but toward particular interpretations of power, conflict, and global relations.

Discussion

This study set out to examine whether Google Discover, as an algorithmically curated news platform, exhibits patterns of sentiment bias in its presentation of U.S. political news. By combining sentiment analysis with thematic categorisation, the findings reveal that the platform does not merely act as a neutral distributor of information but plays an active role in shaping the emotional tone, visibility, and structure of political content. The results demonstrate a clear dominance of negative and negative-leaning sentiment, alongside thematic and relational patterns that privilege conflict-driven narratives and specific political actors. These findings raise important questions about algorithmic power, media representation, and the implications for democratic discourse.

Dominance of Negative Sentiment

The findings of the results clearly highlight a dominance of negative sentiments. With a substantial majority of headlines falling into these categories, it becomes evident that users interacting with Google Discover are consistently exposed to a politically charged and often pessimistic information environment. While the majority of the headlines are framed with an explicit Negative sentiment, even those headlines that appear to be neutral bear a negative-leaning sentiment. The minimal presence of positive and positive-leaning headlines highlights how news around development, peace, and growth is often suppressed using algorithmically driven platforms, like Google Discover. This also helps us in addressing the first research question (RQ1), which aimed to understand the overall sentiment distribution of U.S. political news headlines on Google Discover.

This result indicates that negativity is not an accidental byproduct of algorithmic news curation. Rather, it is a structural feature, often employed intentionally, which stems from prejudiced coding of the datasets, as also highlighted by theorists like Ruha Benjamin. In this sense, Google Discover functions not only as a distributor of information but as a curator of affect, shaping how politics is felt as much as how it is understood.

The findings also resonate with the idea of “Calculated Publics” given by Gillespie, who argues that algorithms actively construct society by determining what becomes visible and meaningful within digital environments.

Algorithmic Bias and Platform Power

The second research question (RQ2) of the study aimed to analyse how sentiment distribution could be explained through the frameworks of algorithmic agenda-setting, platform power, and personalization. In this regard, the extent of negative sentiment observed in the findings points toward a broader issue of algorithmic bias. While platforms often claim neutrality by

attributing content selection to user preferences or behavioural data, the patterns identified in this study suggest otherwise. Negative headlines not only dominate in number but also receive significantly higher visibility, indicating that the system amplifies certain types of content over others.

This helps news organisations as well as aggregators to set clear agendas within a networked setting and target users based on them. It reinforces the idea that news publications not only determine what to think but also how to think about it. Thus, the public's perception of society is shaped by how media and algorithms wish us to see society, and it is often through the lens of people in power. As a result, the platform may systematically privilege outrage, fear, and conflict over balance, nuance, or positivity. Such dynamics raise critical concerns about the transparency and accountability of algorithmic systems.

This can also be understood through the framework of the “black box society” proposed by Frank Pasquale, where decision-making processes are obscured from public scrutiny. In the context of Google Discover, users are unable to fully understand why certain headlines appear in their feed, even as these selections shape their perception of political reality.

Such a system also enables us to wonder if the readers wish to read only negative news, or is it the algorithms that are pushing individuals toward reading such news for the gains of a few people in society.

Thematic Reinforcement of Conflict Narratives

The thematic analysis further strengthens the argument that negativity is structurally embedded within the platform. Among the three themes identified, Conflict, Crisis, and Security emerges as the most dominant, both in terms of frequency and intensity of negative sentiment. Headlines within this category frequently employ emotionally charged language and focus on geopolitical tensions, enforcement actions, and crisis events.

This suggests that the algorithm not only prioritizes negative sentiment but also amplifies specific types of political content that are inherently conflict-driven. As a result, users are repeatedly exposed to narratives that frame politics as volatile, adversarial, and crisis-oriented.

Even within the theme of Political Power and Governance, where a more balanced representation might be expected, the findings indicate a strong tilt toward critical and conflict-based narratives. Similarly, in Electoral Politics and Public Perception, coverage often emphasizes losses, controversies, and declining approval ratings rather than positive developments.

Together, these patterns indicate that algorithmic curation reinforces a particular vision of politics, one that is dominated by tension, disagreement, and instability. Such narratives pave the way for effective political polarization. Dominance of one political group over the other, or one country over the other, shapes the way people perceive geopolitical reality. These realities may not be presented but rather represented for economic and political gains. For the readers, this instills fear, apprehension, and an element of suspicion.

Mean World Syndrome and the new role of Media

The idea of Mean World Syndrome was conceptualised by George Gerbner. Gerbner demonstrated that heavy viewers of television are more likely to perceive the world as dangerous, hostile, and

unsafe, believing it to be worse than it actually is. In the context of new media, when news consumption takes place heavily through the internet and customised platforms, the prominence of news with negative sentiments can have similar implications on the reader. At a time when the world is witnessing several global conflicts, the continuous promotion of negativity can lead to fear, distrust, anxiety, and even phobias towards other communities, regions, or groups.

This highlights the role of algorithms as dynamic entities, as suggested by Seaver, that themselves become cultural practices instead of merely shaping culture. Even minimal disturbances can be seen as huge threats by people due to the extent of negative sentiment in the news that is promoted by these platforms.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial in evaluating the role of algorithmic systems in contemporary media environments, particularly as they continue to influence how citizens engage with political information and democratic processes.

Entity Prominence and Personalisation of Politics

Another key finding of this study is the disproportionate visibility of specific political actors, particularly Donald Trump. This finding also helps in answering the third and final research question (RQ3) that aimed to examine the extent to which Google Discover amplifies specific political actors, groups, or news sources within its U.S. political coverage. Trump's presence in more than half of the headlines indicates a strong focus on individual leadership within the platform's news ecosystem. However, this visibility is not necessarily balanced, as it is often embedded within narratives that emphasize authority, controversy, or geopolitical action. This concentration of attention suggests that algorithmic systems may contribute to the personalisation of political communication, where complex political processes are reduced to the actions and statements of a few dominant figures. While such a focus may enhance readability and engagement, it also risks oversimplifying political discourse and marginalising alternative voices.

Moreover, the limited presence of other political actors indicates an uneven distribution of visibility, raising concerns about representational diversity within algorithmically curated news environments.

At the same time, the prominence of news sources with a pro-government stance further shows how only specific ideas are promoted.

Thus, the patterns identified in this study have significant implications for democratic communication. The dominance of negative sentiment, combined with the amplification of conflict-driven narratives and selective visibility of actors, may contribute to a more polarised and emotionally charged public sphere.

Repeated exposure to such content can shape user perceptions of politics as inherently unstable, thereby fostering deep distrust, anxiety, and disengagement. Additionally, the lack of transparency in algorithmic decision-making limits users' ability to critically evaluate the information they consume.

These findings align with broader concerns about algorithmic systems reinforcing existing power structures, as highlighted by Ruha Benjamin. By privileging certain narratives, actors, and emotional tones, platforms like Google Discover may inadvertently reproduce inequalities in representation and influence.

Conclusion

This study started with the goal to examine the role of algorithmic curation in shaping the sentiment and framing of U.S. political news on Google Discover. By combining sentiment analysis with thematic categorisation, the research aimed to understand whether the platform exhibits systematic bias in the emotional tone of news content, and how such patterns can be interpreted through the lens of algorithmic agenda-setting and platform power.

The findings of this study reveal a clear and consistent dominance of negative and negative-leaning sentiment across the dataset. A significant proportion of headlines, both explicitly negative and subtly negative, indicates that users are heavily exposed to adverse emotional framing when consuming political news through Google Discover in the United States. This pattern is not limited to isolated cases but is structurally embedded across themes, including Political Power and Governance, Conflict, Crisis, and Security, and Electoral Politics and Public Perception. Among these, the Conflict, Crisis, and Security theme demonstrates the highest concentration of negativity, suggesting that algorithmic systems particularly amplify content related to instability, threat, and geopolitical tension.

Beyond sentiment distribution, the study also highlights patterns of visibility and representation. A limited number of dominant news organisations receive repeated exposure, indicating a semi-hierarchical media environment where established sources are prioritised. Similarly, specific political actors, most notably Donald Trump, appear with disproportionately high frequency, pointing toward a personalization of political communication that centres on a few influential figures. At the same time, the relational framing of headlines reveals asymmetrical geopolitical narratives, where powerful nations are consistently paired with comparatively weaker ones, reinforcing simplified hierarchies of global politics.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Google Discover does not merely reflect political reality but actively constructs it. The platform's reliance on engagement-driven algorithms appears to privilege content that is emotionally charged, conflict-oriented, and easily consumable. In doing so, it shapes not only what users see but also how they perceive politics, often as a domain dominated by crisis, confrontation, and instability.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study reinforces the relevance of algorithmic power in contemporary media ecosystems. The findings align with the idea that algorithms function as gatekeepers of public discourse, as discussed by Tarleton Gillespie, while also reflecting concerns about opacity and lack of accountability highlighted by Frank Pasquale [7-8].

Furthermore, the uneven representation of actors and narratives echoes arguments made by Ruha Benjamin regarding the ways in which technological systems can reproduce and reinforce existing structures of power (2019).

Further, as suggested by David Beer, people continue to trust algorithmically curated platforms just due to the notion of the word [9]. This can be inferred through the heavy reliance on Google Discover, even when news pieces can be accessed through social media or even traditional media forms such as television and newspapers.

The implications of these findings are significant for democratic communication. The dominance of negative sentiment and conflict-driven narratives may contribute to heightened political

cynicism, increased polarization, and a reduced capacity for balanced public discourse. When users are repeatedly exposed to a narrow emotional and thematic range of political content, their understanding of political reality becomes correspondingly constrained, thereby leading to what Pariser calls "Filter bubble effect." This raises concerns about the long-term impact of algorithmic curation on civic engagement and informed citizenship [8].

At the same time, the study highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in algorithmic systems. As platforms like Google Discover continue to serve as primary gateways for news consumption, it becomes increasingly important to question how content is selected, prioritised, and presented. Addressing these concerns requires not only technological interventions but also critical media literacy among users and more robust regulatory frameworks.

However, while the study addresses critical research gaps, there are certain limitations.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of the study is the limited number of datasets. While a clear pattern has been established through the dataset at hand, a greater number of headlines could have been more beneficial. This leads us to the second and co-related limitation of the study.

This study analysed all the headlines that emerged on Google Discover in the month of November 2025. However, only analysing a single month can cause doubts. While the continuous rollout of two back-to-back Google core updates blocked the way for analysis of more data, a better dataset could have been prepared by taking into account more months of the year, especially around major political events such as elections or political unrest.

The third and final limitation of the study is posed by the opaque nature of algorithms. While a clear pattern of algorithms promoting news with negative sentiments can be seen, the exact reason for what leads to such results cannot be analysed due to the inscrutable nature of the algorithmic systems. However, some of these limitations can be resolved in future studies around the same lines.

Future Scope

Future studies can delve further to remove the limitations of the current research. First, a longitudinal research can be carried out spanning across several months of a year, which would give more concrete evidence of sentiment bias on Google Discover. This would also help in drawing well-defined patterns and comparing which pattern dominates across which months of the year.

Secondly, the study can also incorporate the analysis of complete articles, rather than just the headlines, to understand if the

negativity seen in headlines is equally prominent within the body of an article or is just used as a tool to attract the audience and extract value from them.

Further, the study can be situated in other countries of the world as well, with comparisons made with the sentiments prominent in the United States. This would give an understanding of the overall audience behavior and how algorithms target different demographics of users across different geographical regions of the globe.

Finally, future studies can also include semi-structured interviews with the readers to analyse the type and sentiment of content that they wish to desire against the type of content actually promoted to them. This would also help in understanding the reason behind intact trust on algorithmically driven platforms among the readers of news.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to address the challenges associated with algorithmic curation of political news on platforms such as Google Discover. These recommendations are aimed at enhancing transparency, promoting informational diversity, and mitigating the dominance of negative and conflict-driven narratives.

Firstly, platforms should ensure algorithmic transparency and responsibility. Users must be made aware of why the news is promoted to them and how they can skip reading such news. While a detailed definition might cause proprietary concerns, even partial transparency, such as indicating key factors influencing content visibility, can help users better understand why certain types of news repeatedly appear in their feeds.

Besides, aggregation platforms such as Google Discover and Yahoo must ensure balanced representation of various outlets and news stories bearing various sentiments. While negative and emotionally charged content may drive engagement, an excessive focus on such narratives can distort public perception. Similarly, diversity in content would ensure democratic news consumption, with the decision-making responsibility lying with the readers.

Finally, contextual labelling and content framing tools can be introduced to support user interpretation. For instance, indicating whether a headline relates to conflict, policy, or electoral outcomes may help users critically engage with the content rather than passively consuming it.

In conclusion, while algorithmic systems offer efficiency and personalization, their unchecked influence on news curation poses significant challenges. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more balanced, responsible, and democratically aligned media landscape [16-22].

Appendices Coding Sheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Title	Source	Visibility	Sentiment Score	NLP Category	Adjusted	Theme
2	Germany Unites With Italy, Turkey, China, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, And More As Canada Strengthens Travel Advisory Due To Escalating Security Threats, Protests, And Border Control Measures	TTW	3.19M	-0.596	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
3	One of world's longest serving democratic leaders loses election	ABC News	2.63M	-0.782	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
4	White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt's relative detained by ICE	NBC	1.48M	-0.272	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
5	Trump says he is 'cancelling' Biden's executive orders signed by autopen	YouTube (NBC)	1.32M	-0.574	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
6	Map Shows Donald Trump's Approval Rating in Each State After 10 Months	Newsweek	1.15M	0.015	Neutral	Slight Positive	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
7	A mother was taken into custody by ICE. Then the public learned of her family tie to the White House	CNN	937.66K	-0.152	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
8	Trump says he's terminating all orders Biden signed with autopen	YouTube (ABC7)	880.1K	-0.69	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
9	Trump Frees Fraudster Just Days Into Seven-Year Prison Sentence	NYT	858.02K	-0.633	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
10	Pres Trump suspends immigration applications of Afghan nationals	YouTube (ABC News)	816.09K	-0.324	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
11	Woman with family ties to White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt arrested by ICE	CNN	752.39K	-0.273	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
12	Johnson tells Trump administration House Republicans don't want to extend ACA subsidies, sources say	YouTube (CBS News)	667.66K	-0.477	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
13	Somalia enforces travel authorisation system as tensions rise with Somaliland, Puntland	Somali Guardian	585.59K	-0.438	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
14	Vladimir Putin doubles down on demands for Ukrainian territory ahead of talks	YouTube (BBC News)	563.64K	-0.85	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
15	Secy. Noem made final call on deportation flights, says DOJ	YouTube (MS Now)	554.67K	-0.036	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
16	Australia Sen. Pauline Hanson barred from Parliament for wearing burqa in pro	YouTube (AP)	501.66K	-0.494	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
17	Trump admin live updates: Trump says he would 'absolutely' denaturalize Amer	ABC	487.82K	-0.818	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
18	New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani asks 179 staffers who work for En	ABC7 NewYork	480.96K	-0.285	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
19	Trump says he's canceling all Biden orders that were signed using an autopen	CBS News	460.62K	-0.525	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
20	Trump says he'll release MRI results; he doesn't know what part of his body wa	AP	404K	-0.817	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception

1. Coding Sheet - Image 1

21	NYC Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani requests resignations from 179 Eric Adams	CBS News	377.37K	-0.251	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
22	Venezuela Bans Airlines For 'Joining US Sponsored Terror', Trump Gets Base	YouTube (CRUX and CNN-News18)	368.92K	-0.625	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
23	South Africa hits back after Trump says US won't invite it for G20 next year	BBC	337.21K	-0.843	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
24	Trump says Venezuelan airspace should be 'closed in its entirety'	YouTube (ABC News)	333.17K	-0.633	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
25	Vladimir Putin Breaks His Silence on Russia-Ukraine Peace Plan	YouTube (TODAY)	332.34K	-0.089	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
26	Appeals court disqualifies Alina Habba, Trump's former personal lawyer, as act	CBS News	313.99K	-0.433	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
27	National guard member Sarah Beckstrom has died after shooting in Washingto	The Guardian	304.1K	-0.498	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
28	Congressmen introduce bipartisan bill to protect Obamacare tax credits	YouTube (MS Now)	298.29K	0.373	Positive	Positive	Political Power & Governance
29	Trump drops green card bomb, freezes 235K cards; orders mass refugee reche	YouTube (The Economic Times)	284.16K	-0.548	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
30	Appeals court upholds \$1M penalty against Trump in lawsuit against Hillary Clir	Politico	278.5K	-0.369	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
31	Retired general weighs in on Hegseth's order to investigate lawmakers	YouTube (ABC News)	275.55K	-0.018	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
32	Bipartisan push for congressional term limits gains momentum amid Greene's r	YouTube (FOX)	255.9K	0.05	Neutral	Slight Positive	Political Power & Governance
33	Trump says it 'may be necessary' to extend Obamacare subsidies that fuelled s	ABC News	236.77K	-0.467	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
34	Camey admits that saying "Who cares?" about Trump phone call was 'poor chr	Global News	228.83K	-0.897	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
35	Putin says US plan could be 'basis' of a Ukraine deal but threatens to take land	CNN News	228.51K	-0.642	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
36	Trump: US land action in Venezuela will start 'very soon'	YouTube (CNN)	222.87K	-0.06	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
37	Trump says one of the two West Virginia National Guard members shot by Afgi	AP	212.95K	-0.433	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
38	Trump 'cancelling' Biden executive orders signed by autopen	NBC	205.09K	-0.636	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
39	"Very Soon:" Trump says land strikes will begin in Venezuela	YouTube (LiveNOW from FOX)	204.52K	-0.076	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
40	Zelensky's top adviser resigns after anti-corruption police raid his home	YouTube (CNN)	201.85K	-0.231	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
41	Trump's approval rating hits second-term low as Republican support dips	USA Today	201.6K	-0.79	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
42	US will reexamine all green cards issued to people from 19 countries as Trump	CNN	199.81K	-0.403	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
43	Trump administration's effort to end 1960s school desegregation cases faces a	AP	192.43K	-0.696	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
44	Trump administration orders reexamination of some green card holders	YouTube (NBC News)	190.72K	-0.114	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security

2. Coding Sheet - Image 2

45	Appeals Court Says Alina Habba, Former Trump Lawyer, Is Serving Unlawfully NYT	188.54K	-0.594	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
46	Netanyahu writes to Israeli president requesting pardon in corruption cases YouTube (Al Jazeera English)	185.07K	-0.064	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
47	Pro-Putin NATO Nation Quietly Pumps Oil Into Serbia While Russia Keeps US YouTube (Hindustan Times)	183.12K	-0.674	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
48	National Guard member Sarah Beckstrom dies after being shot in DC attack, Ti YouTube (ABC 7)	180.41K	-0.564	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
49	Ukraine peace talks shaken up by resignation of Zelenskyy's top aide in corrupt NBC	179.67K	-0.575	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
50	Morale has never been lower: More GOP reps reportedly plot early exits YouTube (MS Now)	175.83K	-0.929	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
51	Trump's pick to replace DeSantis faces a Republican pile-on in Florida Politico	167.9K	-0.855	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
52	Putin breaks his silence on Ukraine peace plan, says Moscow ready for 'serious NBC News	167.16K	0.096	Neutral	Slight Positive	Conflict, Crisis & Security
53	Kristi Noem made final call on deportation flights after judge ordered planes to NBC News	160.07K	-0.164	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
54	Income taxes could be eliminated soon due to tariffs, Trump says Axios	159.16K	0.563	Positive	Positive	Political Power & Governance
55	DOJ acknowledges Kristi Noem made decision to continue deportation flights t CNN	155.85K	-0.467	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
56	Ukraine reaches "understanding" with US on peace plan as Trump says "deal n YouTube (BBC News)	151.67K	0.344	Positive	Positive	Conflict, Crisis & Security
57	Russia-Ukraine War Update: Germany Says Putin Has "No Successful Exit" Fn YouTube (Moneycontrol)	151.57K	-0.74	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
58	In the Michigan city where Trump held his 100 days rally, voters wait for an eco NBC News	145.07K	-0.168	Neutral	Slight Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
59	Slight majority of Illinoisans approve of Gov. JB Pritzker as he seeks third term, Fox 32	144.42K	0.263	Positive	Positive	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
60	Trump administration will re-examine Green Card holders from 19 countries BBC News	140.98K	-0.155	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
61	Trump says he'll release MRI results and that he doesn't know what part of his NBC News	134.18K	-0.319	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
62	Congressional committees launch inquiries into second strike on alleged drug t YouTube (NBC News)	132.12K	-0.323	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
63	Analysis: Report of Hegseth 'kill everybody' order follows military officials' depa YouTube (CNN)	129.54K	-0.16	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
64	Steve Kornacki: Polls don't show 'huge gap' in favorability between Democrats YouTube (NBC News)	128.72K	-0.069	Neutral	Slight Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
65	China demands Japan clarify Taiwan stance as tensions escalate YouTube (SkyNews Australia)	126.22K	-0.418	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
66	President Trump orders green cards from Somalia, other countries of "concern" CBS News	120.84K	-0.229	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
67	Ukraine-Russia peace deal closer than ever, Trump says YouTube (ABC News)	120.75K	0.685	Positive	Positive	Conflict, Crisis & Security
68	Trump says he'll release MRI results after Walz claims president is "fading phyt: Axios	117.97K	-0.493	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception

3. Coding Sheet - Image 3

68	Trump says he'll release MRI results after Walz claims president is "fading phyt: Axios	117.97K	-0.493	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
69	Sen. Tim Kaine says reported second strike on alleged drug boat "rises to the i CBS News	117.2K	-0.897	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
70	Eby speaks after Camey, Smith sign deal paving the way for oil pipeline YouTube (CBC News)	111.88K	0.192	Neutral	Slight Positive	Political Power & Governance
71	Trump rages about New York Times story on age: 'PERFECT PHYSICAL EXAM Politico	111.79K	-0.345	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
72	Sen. Kelly says Pete Hegseth 'totally unqualified' after being bashed over displ: ABC News	111.22K	-0.787	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
73	Trump says he plans to pardon former Honduran President Hernandez for 202: AP	107.62K	-0.185	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
74	White House denies Trump is considering firing Patel - sources say otherwise YouTube (MS Now)	106.45K	-0.334	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
75	NEW: FBI reached out to Capitol police to arrange interviews with Dems in vide YouTube (MS Now)	103.8K	-0.052	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
76	Former Peruvian President sentenced: Pedro Castillo sent to prison for 11 year AL Jazeera English	102.16K	-0.443	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
77	Putin doubles down on demands for Ukrainian territory ahead of talks with US BBC	99.03K	-0.826	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
78	Donald Trump says airspace above and around Venezuela is closed The Guardian	96.77K	-0.459	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
79	Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear says Democrats need to "reignite that American i YouTube (CBS News)	94.56K	0.197	Neutral	Slight Positive	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
80	What we do matters: General Dagvin Anderson YouTube (Fox News)	94.11K	0.086	Neutral	Slight Positive	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
81	Shorter Days, Signs of Fatigue: Trump Faces Realities of Aging in Office NYT	91.04K	-0.863	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
82	Russia-Ukraine War: Russian President's Big Statement on Ukraine War WIO YouTube (WION)	90.81K	-0.031	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
83	Trump Declares Venezuelan Airspace Closed" NYT	88.58K	-0.361	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
84	Trump says he'll release MRI results; he doesn't know what part of his body wa Atlanta News First	86.23K	-0.819	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
85	N.Y. state Sen. Liz Krueger discusses no-fault separation bill aimed to make an Spectrum News	85.2K	0.058	Neutral	Slight Positive	Political Power & Governance
86	Trump says he will 'permanently pause' migration from 'third world countries' af The Guardian	79.38K	-0.474	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
87	Trump administration sending 500 more National Guard troops to D.C. after shi CBS News	79.17K	-0.175	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
88	Mark Kelly says Trump migrant crackdown shows 'they don't want Brown peopl YouTube (CBS News)	77.59K	-0.651	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
89	US official says Ukraine agrees to peace proposal as Zelenskyy says 'much wor YouTube (CNN)	77.04K	0.059	Neutral	Slight Positive	Conflict, Crisis & Security
90	Republican Party 'worried to death' ahead of high-stakes Tennessee special el YouTube (SkyNews Australia)	75.94K	-0.89	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception

4. Coding Sheet - Image 4

91	Stephen A. Smith Unleashes On Sen. Mark Kelly Over Democrats' 'Illegal Orde HuffPost	74.93K	-0.611	Negative	Negative	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
92	Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia of Long Beach could represent conservative O. Los Angeles Daily News	73.77K	0.164	Neutral	Slight Positive	Electoral Politics & Public Perception
93	Hegseth responds to report that boat survivors were killed as a result of his ord ABC News	73.7K	-0.67	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance
94	Trump Says U.S. Military May Soon Launch Land Operations Against Venezue YouTube (NTD)	73.57K	-0.097	Neutral	Slight Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
95	Israelis protest in Tel Aviv after Netanyahu seeks pardon on fraud cases YouTube (Al Jazeera English)	72.78K	-0.499	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
96	Trump says airspace above and surrounding Venezuela to be closed in its entir Reuters	70.07K	-0.605	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
97	Georgia prosecutor who took over 2020 election interference case says he's dr NBC News	69.57K	-0.081	Neutral	Slight Negative	Political Power & Governance
98	Trump says US will permanently pause migration from 'Third World Countries' Reuters	68.58K	-0.442	Negative	Negative	Conflict, Crisis & Security
99	New Yorkers will learn the hard way: Mami's policies will not be backed up YouTube (SkyNews Australia)	68.5K	-0.948	Negative	Negative	Political Power & Governance

5. Coding Sheet - Image 5

References

1. Shehata J (2025) New Data: Google Discover is now ~70% of total Google Traffic. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/johnshehata_seo-googlediscover-digitalpublishing-activit-y-7407871553750794240-rma/.
2. Beer D (2017) The social power of algorithms. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20: 1-13.
3. Corby K, McHugh M (2018) Discover new information and inspiration with Search, no query required. Google Blog.
4. Strzelecki A, Rizun, M (2023) Exploring the Impact of Google Discover on Users and Publishers: A Data-driven Study <https://aisel.aisnet.org/isd2014/proceedings2023/uicx/1/>.
5. Dem Institute (2025) V-DEM Democracy Report 2025, 25 Years of Autocratization –Democracy Trumped? V-Dem https://www.v-dem.net/documents/60/V-dem-dr%202025_lowres.pdf.
6. Wu C, Jiang S, Sun J, Liu Y (2025). Research on the influence mechanism of emotional communication on Twitter (X) and the effect of spreading public anger. *Acta Psychologica* 260: 1-13.
7. Udupa S (2021) Digital technology and extreme speech: approaches to counter online hate https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/digital_technology_and_extreme_speech_udupa_10_aug2021.pdf.
8. Kumar M (2024) Caste-based hate speech moderation on Facebook (Meta) and Twitter (X): Challenges in Categorization. Open Access Publications from the University of California <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/170845t6>.
9. Wu C, Wang Y, Zhang Y, Wang H, Pang Y (2025) Confront hate with AI: how AI-generated counter speech helps against hate speech on social Media? 101.
10. Gillespie T (2016) Trendingtrending: When algorithms become culture. In R. Seyfert & J. Roberge (Eds.), *Algorithmic Cultures: Essays on Meaning, Performance and New Technologies*. Routledge <https://tarletongillespie.org/essays/Gillespie%20-%20trendingtrending%20PREPRINT.pdf>.
11. Seaver N (2018) Captivating algorithms: Recommender systems as traps. *Journal of Material Culture* 1-16.
12. Diakopoulos N (2019) Automating the News: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Media.
13. Harvard University Press <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674976986>.
14. Pasquale F (2015) *The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information*. Harvard University Press <https://www.hup.harvard.edu/books/9780674970847>.
14. Pariser E (2011) *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from you*. Penguin Books Limited https://hci.stanford.edu/courses/cs047n/readings/The_Filter_Bubble.pdf.
15. Brady W, Wills J A, Jost J T, Tucker J (2017) Emotion shapes the diffusion of moralized content in social networks.
16. Benjamin R (2019) *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*. Polity Press 34: 1-3.
17. Creswell J W (2009) Research design https://www.ucg.ac.me/skladiste/blog_609332/objava_105202/fajlovi/Creswell.pdf.
18. Tashakkori A, Teddlie C (Eds) (2010) *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* https://methods.sagepub.com/hnbk/edvol/sage-handbook-of-mixed-methods-social-behavioral-research-2e/toc#_.
19. Sullivan M (2026) CBS News is convulsing as Larry Ellison tries to please Trump | Margaret Sullivan. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/commentisfree>.
20. Boczkowski P, Mitchelstein E, Matassi M (2019). Incidental News: How Young People Consume News on Social Media.
21. Google Cloud (nd) Cloud Natural Language API. Google Cloud <https://docs.cloud.google.com/natural-language/docs/analyzing-sentiment#:~:text=Senti%20ment%20Analysis%20inspects%20the%20given,see%20Interpreting%20sentiment%20a%20analysis%20values>.
22. What is a Recommendation System? | Data Science. (n.d.). NVIDIA. Retrieved April 4, 2026, from <https://www.nvidia.com/en-us/glossary/recommendation-system/>.

Copyright: ©2026 Rupam Shukla. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.