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Research Articles

Algorithmic Resonance: AI-Driven Curation, Musical Taste, Identity, and Global Cultural Flows

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Abstract
Algorithmic curation systems have become an important part of contemporary music platforms, mediating how listeners discover, classify, and engage with sound. This article examines how recommendation infrastructures on Spotify, TikTok, and Douyin participate in the organization of musical taste, identity negotiation, and transnational circulation. Bringing together platform studies, cultural sociology, and qualitative evidence from interviews, platform observations, and case-tracing materials, the study develops algorithmic resonance as a conceptual framework for explaining how engagement signals, platform optimization, and repeated exposure become linked in music culture. The analysis identifies three dynamics: path-dependent taste stabilization, optimization-oriented creative production, and affinity-based global circulation. Rather than claiming direct causal access to proprietary algorithms, the article offers an interpretive account of how platform-visible interfaces, creator practices, and user reflections reveal recurring feedback loops between behavior, visibility, and cultural value. It contributes to debates on algorithmic culture by showing that recommendation systems do not merely distribute music; they help organize the temporal, affective, and infrastructural conditions through which music becomes familiar, valuable, and socially meaningful.

Keywords: algorithmic curation; music platforms; cultural intermediaries; platformization; creative labor; global cultural flows

Across streaming and short-video platforms, music no longer circulates primarily through broadcast logics, retail distribution, or subcultural gatekeeping. It circulates through algorithmically curated exposure regimes in which recommendation models, ranking systems, playlist infrastructures, and interface prompts jointly define what becomes audible, repeatable, and socially meaningful (Beer 2017; Gillespie 2014; Morris and Powers 2015; Striphas 2015). In this environment, discovery is not a neutral service layer. It is a cultural sorting infrastructure that arranges attention, assigns relevance, and stabilizes patterns of listening through computational procedures whose criteria are only partially visible to users and creators (Bucher 2018; Hallinan and Striphas 2016). The stakes are therefore not limited to consumption convenience or market efficiency. When recommendation systems determine which tracks are surfaced, which micro-genres become legible, and which moods are reinforced as default listening contexts, they participate in the production of cultural value, shaping taste, identity, and global circulation in ways that require communication- and culture-theoretic explanation.

Research on algorithmic media has shown that platforms do not simply reflect culture; they operationalize and redistribute it through metrics, categories, and machine-readable proxies (Bucher 2018; Couldry and Mejias 2019; Gillespie 2014; Kitchin 2017; Seaver 2019). In music, these dynamics are intensified by the continuous, intimate, and affective character of listening. Music accompanies routines, regulates moods, signals belonging, and becomes a resource for self-narration. Platform curation increasingly recodes these practices into standardized labels such as focus, chill, study, or sad, and makes them actionable for recommender systems. This conversion is not merely a technical translation; it reorganizes cultural mediation. What gets recommended becomes what gets rehearsed, and what gets rehearsed begins to feel familiar. This does not mean that algorithms determine taste in a linear or totalizing manner. It means that platforms participate in shaping the conditions under which preferences are repeated, recognized, and stabilized.

Existing scholarship has clarified several important dimensions of this transformation. Studies of algorithmic power examine ranking, visibility, opacity, and governance (Ananny and Crawford 2018; Beer 2017; Bucher 2018; Gillespie 2014; Kitchin 2017). Research on streaming music

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shows how playlists and recommendation interfaces reshape curation, discovery, and consumption (Bonini and Gandini 2019; Eriksson et al. 2019; Morris and Powers 2015; Prey 2018; Vaizman 2023). Work on platformization demonstrates how cultural labor becomes dependent on proprietary infrastructures and metrics (Nieborg and Poell 2018; Plantin et al. 2018; Poell, Nieborg, and Duffy 2022; Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck 2019; Srnicek 2017; van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018). Yet these strands often remain analytically separated. They explain exposure, identity, or production, but less often specify the cultural mechanism through which these dimensions become connected over time.

This article addresses that gap by developing the concept of algorithmic resonance. The term describes a recursive process in which user engagement, platform inference, curated exposure, and creative adaptation become mutually reinforcing. Algorithmic resonance is not offered as a metaphor for influence in general, but as a mechanism for understanding how music platforms align attention, affect, and visibility. It foregrounds repetition, path dependence, temporality, and iterative updating. The concept is especially useful for music because musical experience is already resonant in the affective and social sense: songs become meaningful through recurrence, attachment, mood, and shared use. Algorithmic systems do not create these dynamics from nothing, but they increasingly format and scale them.

The article makes three arguments. First, algorithmic curation contributes to the formation of taste profiles that are experienced as personal but are co-produced by platform feedback. Second, artists and creators increasingly adapt their work to perceived or measurable platform conditions, making algorithmic visibility part of creative decision-making. Third, global circulation is increasingly organized through affinity-based clusters and micro-publics rather than only through national markets or linear diffusion. These arguments are developed through a qualitative and analytically synthetic research design that combines platform comparison, public documentation, platform observation, case tracing, and an original qualitative evidence pack containing 36 participant profiles, 108 interview excerpts, 60 platform observations, and 18 case-tracing entries.

The contribution of this article is conceptual and interpretive rather than computationally causal. It does not claim access to proprietary recommendation models, nor does it attempt to reverse-engineer hidden ranking systems. Instead, it examines observable traces: how platforms describe recommendation, how interfaces organize discovery, how users and creators articulate their relations with algorithmic feeds, and how visibility appears to move across platform environments. This evidentiary stance is important because platform opacity is not simply a methodological obstacle. It is part of the cultural power being analyzed. The remainder of the article first reviews relevant scholarship, then develops algorithmic resonance as a theoretical framework, clarifies the analytical focus and methodology, presents three findings, and discusses the theoretical, cultural, and governance implications of algorithmically mediated music culture.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews four bodies of scholarship that motivate the concept of algorithmic resonance: algorithmic recommendation and musical taste, identity and reflexivity, platformized creativity, and global cultural flows. Placing the literature review before the framework clarifies the gap to which the concept responds. Existing research has produced strong accounts of recommendation, platform power, and creative labor, but it has not fully connected these domains through a mechanism that explains how recursive mediation links taste, identity, production, and circulation.

2.1. Algorithmic Recommendation and Musical Taste

Research on musical taste has long emphasized social construction, habitus, and cultural capital rather than purely individual preference (Bourdieu 1984). Digital platforms do not replace these older social dynamics; they reconfigure how they are encountered and made actionable. Streaming services shift listening from ownership and collection toward access, recommendation, and playlist navigation (Morris and Powers 2015). In this setting, recommendation systems do not merely help users find content they already want. They also structure what counts as discoverable and what forms of music become repeated enough to be incorporated into taste.

Studies of streaming demonstrate that personalization can increase access while also creating patterned forms of repetition (Fernández 2024; Villermet et al. 2021). Datta, Knox, and Bronnenberg (2018) show that streaming adoption can expand the quantity and diversity of consumption, but recommendation systems also segment attention through behavioral profiles. Anderson et al. (2020) similarly show that algorithmic mediation can shape diversity in consumption, suggesting that access to a vast catalogue does not automatically produce diverse listening. Prey (2018) describes this as algorithmic individuation: the platform addresses users as distinct individuals while operating through standardized data categories and marketable profiles.

The literature therefore establishes a tension. Platforms promise individualized discovery, but discovery is organized through feedback signals that reward familiarity, engagement, and retention. What remains underdeveloped is the temporal mechanism through which repeated recommendations become culturally formative. Taste is not changed by one recommendation alone. It is shaped through iterative exposure, user response, model updating, and renewed exposure. Algorithmic resonance names this loop and treats repetition as a central cultural mechanism rather than a minor technical feature.

2.2. Algorithmic Mediation, Identity, and Reflexivity

A second literature examines how algorithmic systems participate in identity formation and reflexive self-understanding. Algorithmic media classify users, infer preferences, and present these in forms that users can recognize, contest, or internalize (Cheney-Lippold 2017). Music platforms are especially important in this respect because music is a privileged medium for emotional regulation, memory, and social belonging. Personalized playlists, yearly summaries, and mood categories convert behavior into identity claims: this is your taste, your mood, your decade, your sound.

Recent studies show that users are not passive recipients of these classifications. Freeman, Gibbs, and Nansen (2022) find that listeners develop affective and sometimes possessive relations with automated curation, while Freeman, Gibbs, and Nansen (2023) document experiences of personalization that are simultaneously intimate and impersonal. Cole (2024) shows that users possess forms of algorithmic knowledge and reflexivity; they interpret, train, resist, or strategically manage recommendation systems. These studies complicate deterministic accounts by showing that identity under algorithmic mediation is co-produced through user interpretation and platform classification.

At the same time, reflexivity occurs within asymmetric infrastructures. Users may try to train a feed, but the criteria by which the feed responds remain opaque and dynamic. Identity is therefore negotiated within categories that are partially user-facing and partially hidden. This is why algorithmic resonance must account not only for platform power, but also for user reflexivity. Resonance is not a one-way imposition; it is a structured interaction in which users learn from and act upon algorithmic outputs, while platforms translate those actions back into future recommendations.

2.3. Platformized Creativity and Cultural Labor

A third body of scholarship concerns platformization. Nieborg and Poell (2018) define platformization as the penetration of platform infrastructures, economic models, and governance frameworks into cultural production. In music, platformization means that creation, distribution, promotion, and evaluation increasingly pass through proprietary systems such as streaming playlists, short-video feeds, analytics dashboards, and creator tools. The result is not simply a new marketing channel but a reorganization of creative labor.

Research on music platforms shows that playlist inclusion, skip rates, completion rates, repeatability, and sound-page circulation can shape artists' decisions about song structure, release timing, hooks, and promotional formats (Aguiar and Waldfogel 2021; Bonini and Gandini 2019; Morris 2020; Prey 2020; Raffa and Pronzato 2025). Short-video platforms intensify these dynamics because music travels as snippets, memes, challenges, and audiovisual templates. Kaye, Chen, and Zeng (2021) show that TikTok and Douyin developed through parallel platformization: they share platform affordances but operate in different market and governance environments. This distinction is crucial because algorithmic resonance is not universal in a simple sense; it is shaped by platform-specific architectures and regulatory-cultural contexts.

Creative labor under algorithmic mediation is thus anticipatory. Musicians and marketers act not only for human audiences but also for imagined platform evaluations. They may not know the algorithm, but they orient to its perceived rhythms. Existing literature has described this as data-driven cultural production and platform dependency, but less attention has been given to how production strategies feed back into the resonance loop itself. When creators compose for retention, seed snippets for rapid reuse, or adjust release schedules to feed rhythms, they become active participants in the reproduction of algorithmic resonance.

2.4. Global Cultural Flows and Affinity-Based Circulation

The fourth literature concerns global cultural circulation. Earlier theories of globalization often emphasized national markets, cultural imperialism, hybridity, or transnational diffusion. Platformized music circulation complicates these models because visibility is increasingly organized through data-driven affinity. A song may travel across borders not because a label promotes it internationally, but because it resonates within a cluster of users whose engagement patterns indicate potential affinity.

Spotify, TikTok, and Douyin each organize cross-border circulation differently. Spotify tends to stabilize taste through playlists and long-term histories; TikTok accelerates circulation through short-form audiovisual repetition; Douyin combines similar short-video affordances with a distinct Chinese platform ecology and governance environment. These platforms can enable unexpected transnational visibility, but they can also flatten cultural context, privilege dominant languages, and amplify formats that are easily categorized or reused (Abidin 2021; Cunningham and Craig 2019; Hesmondhalgh et al. 2023; Lobato 2019).

This literature demonstrates that digital globalization is not simply more open circulation. It is also a new system of attention allocation. Webster (2014) argues that abundance intensifies competition for attention; Napoli (2019) similarly emphasizes the public-interest implications of algorithmic distribution. What remains under-theorized is how micro-level engagement loops scale into macro-level cultural visibility. Algorithmic resonance addresses this by linking individual feedback to platform amplification and cross-platform circulation.

3. Theoretical Framework: Algorithmic Resonance

The reviewed literature points to a clear conceptual problem. Recommendation systems shape taste, users negotiate algorithmic identities, creators adapt to metrics, and global music circulates through platform infrastructures. Yet these processes are often treated as separate. Algorithmic resonance is proposed here as a multilevel cultural mechanism that links them through recursive feedback.

3.1. Algorithms as Cultural Intermediaries

In cultural sociology, cultural intermediaries mediate between production and consumption by shaping evaluation, classification, and circulation (Bourdieu 1984). Critics, radio programmers, labels, and tastemakers historically performed this role through editorial judgment. In platformized music environments, many of these functions are embedded in algorithmic systems. Recommendation engines, playlists, feed-ranking models, sound pages, and creator analytics organize what becomes visible and how visibility is interpreted.

Algorithmic intermediaries differ from earlier gatekeepers in two respects. First, their judgments are partly opaque. Users see playlists and feeds, but not the full criteria through which tracks are ranked. Second, their judgments are adaptive. They update through streams of behavioral data, which means that mediation is ongoing rather than episodic. This adaptive quality is central to algorithmic resonance. Platforms do not simply decide once; they continuously recalibrate exposure environments in response to engagement.

3.2. From Exposure to Resonance Loops

A recommendation is often discussed as an exposure event: the system presents a track to a user. Algorithmic resonance shifts attention from the event to the loop. The loop begins when a platform captures engagement signals such as listening duration, skips, likes, saves, shares, replays, searches, or video reuse. These signals are translated into inferences about user preference, content relevance, audience cluster, and commercial value. The inferences then shape future exposure, which generates further signals. Over time, the loop can stabilize a taste trajectory, intensify a visibility path, or encourage a creative adaptation.

Resonance therefore names the alignment between user behavior, content features, and platform optimization. The term does not imply

harmonious agreement. Resonance can be enabling, constraining, distorted, or unequal. A user may feel recognized by a playlist, but also trapped by repetition. A creator may benefit from viral exposure, but also become dependent on volatile thresholds. A local sound may cross borders, but lose cultural specificity as it becomes a trend template. The concept is useful precisely because it captures this ambivalence.

3.3. Temporality and Iterative Updating

A key revision to the framework is the incorporation of algorithmic temporality. Recommendation systems should not be treated as stable objects with fixed internal logics. They are changing environments. Model updates, interface experiments, platform governance shifts, trend cycles, and market priorities alter the conditions of resonance. This matters because the cultural effects of recommendation unfold through time. Spotify's longer-term personalization may stabilize taste through cumulative histories; TikTok's feed can recalibrate quickly around short-term signals; Douyin's circulation is shaped by short-video engagement as well as localized governance and platform policy.

Temporality also affects user and creator reflexivity. Participants in the dataset repeatedly described recommendation as moving rather than fixed.

> *One playlist curator stated that "the algorithm is not one fixed gatekeeper; it feels like a moving environment"* (P35, non-binary, 23–29, playlist curator, United Kingdom, Spotify user).
>
> *A producer similarly observed that "what worked last month no longer works now; the feed seems to reward a different tempo of attention"* (P28, female, 40–49, music marketer, Japan, Spotify user).

These accounts do not reveal hidden code, but they demonstrate how algorithmic change is experienced as a cultural condition.

3.4. Algorithmic Resonance as a Multilevel Cultural Mechanism

Algorithmic resonance operates across three levels. At the micro level, user-algorithm feedback shapes listening routines and taste profiles. At the meso level, creators and cultural workers adapt production and promotion to perceived platform criteria. At the macro level, aggregated resonance patterns reorganize cultural circulation by clustering audiences around predicted affinity. These levels are analytically distinct but empirically connected. Listening produces data; data affects visibility; visibility shapes creative strategy; creative strategy produces new content designed for future visibility.

The concept therefore contributes to platform studies by specifying a cultural mechanism rather than merely asserting platform influence. It contributes to music studies by showing how musical value is mediated through feedback infrastructures. It contributes to globalization debates by explaining how cross-border circulation can be simultaneously expansive and uneven. Most importantly, algorithmic resonance clarifies how algorithmic mediation becomes culturally consequential without requiring a deterministic claim that algorithms directly cause taste, identity, or globalization.

4. Analytical Focus

The analysis focuses on three domains corresponding to the multilevel logic of algorithmic resonance. This section clarifies what is analyzed; methodological details are consolidated in the next section.

The first domain is algorithmic taste profiles and path dependence. Taste profiles are not treated as private psychological states but as socio-technical formations produced through repeated interactions between users and recommendation systems. The central question is how exposure histories become stabilized and how users interpret this stabilization. This domain is important because platforms often frame personalization as expanded choice, while users often experience it as a mixture of recognition, convenience, repetition, and constraint.

The second domain is platformized creativity and optimization-oriented production. Here the analysis examines how artists, creators, playlist curators, and music marketers orient to platform visibility. The focus is not whether algorithms mechanically determine creative choices, but how perceived algorithmic conditions enter production decisions. This includes attention to hook construction, snippet design, release rhythm, playlist strategy, creator seeding, dashboard anxiety, and efforts to remain legible within platform metrics.

The third domain is fragmented global micro-communities and resonance-based cultural flows. The analysis asks how music travels through affinity networks, short-video trends, and cross-platform clusters. Rather than assuming that digital platforms simply globalize music, this domain examines the uneven cultural consequences of resonance-based circulation: cross-border exposure, flattened context, language advantage, genre legibility, and the concentration of attention around content that performs well under early engagement conditions.

Together, these domains allow the study to examine algorithmic resonance without overstating causal access to proprietary systems. The focus is on patterned relations among platform-visible features, user and creator accounts, documented platform observations, and case-tracing materials.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive, and analytically synthetic design. It combines comparative platform analysis, public documentation, platform observation, interview excerpts, and case tracing. The design is appropriate because the research question concerns cultural mediation under algorithmic opacity rather than measurement of hidden model parameters. The article does not claim to audit source code or infer exact ranking weights. Instead, it analyzes how algorithmic music culture becomes visible through interfaces, creator tools, participant accounts, and documented circulation patterns.

5.2. Case Selection: Spotify, TikTok, and Douyin

Spotify, TikTok, and Douyin were selected because they represent distinct but influential models of algorithmic music circulation. Spotify exemplifies subscription-based music streaming, playlist curation, and longer-term personalization. TikTok represents short-video-based viral circulation in which music functions as a reusable audiovisual resource. Douyin provides a parallel but locally governed short-video ecosystem shaped by Chinese platform regulation, monetization, and creator infrastructures. The comparison is not designed to establish universal effects, but to identify how resonance dynamics vary across platform architectures and temporalities.

5.3. Data Sources and Qualitative Dataset

The study uses five sources of evidence. First, it analyzes relevant scholarship and public platform-facing materials on recommendation, playlists, creator tools, and transparency. Second, it compares interface-level recommendation structures, including discovery pathways, playlists, sound pages, and creator analytics. Third, it draws on an original qualitative evidence pack designed to support the article's interpretive claims. The pack includes 36 participant profiles, 108 interview excerpts, 60 platform observations, and 18 case-tracing entries. Participants include listeners, playlist curators, producers, short-video creators, independent musicians, and music marketers across Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Fourth, platform observations record public or interface-level evidence such as editorial playlists, sound pages, trend charts, creator analytics dashboards, and recommendation features. Fifth, case-tracing entries reconstruct how a unit such as a track, sound snippet, playlist, challenge, or traffic drop moves through trigger, early engagement, platform amplification, audience or creator adaptation, and cultural outcome.

5.4. Data Collection, Recruitment, and Ethical Handling

The interview materials were collected and conducted by the author as part of the study's original qualitative evidence pack. Data collection was carried out over an approximate period from January 2026 to April 2026, in parallel with platform observation and case-tracing work. Participants were recruited through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling to include listeners, creators, playlist curators, producers, independent musicians, and music marketers across multiple platform environments. To ensure methodological traceability, the qualitative dataset was systematically structured into interlinked components, including 36 anonymized participant profiles, 108 interview excerpts, 60 platform observations, and 18 case-tracing entries. Each interview excerpt is linked to a participant identifier, analytical theme code, and subtheme category defined in the study's codebook, while platform observations and case-tracing entries are cross-referenced through shared thematic and processual logic. This structured linkage allows analytical claims in the findings to be traced back to specific evidence categories without exposing identifiable participant information. All participant identifiers were anonymized, and informed consent was obtained prior to data inclusion in the analysis.

5.5. Analytical Procedure

The coding procedure followed a thematic logic. The dataset's codebook identifies nine thematic codes: path-dependent taste stabilization, affective standardization, algorithmic self-recognition, reflexive algorithm training, optimization-oriented creativity, visibility threshold anxiety, resonance-based micro-publics, uneven linguistic and genre visibility, and temporal volatility of recommendation logic. These codes were grouped into the three analytical domains developed above. Taste formation drew mainly on path dependence, affective standardization, algorithmic self-recognition, and reflexive algorithm training. Creative production drew on optimization-oriented creativity, visibility threshold anxiety, and temporal volatility. Global circulation drew on resonance-based micro-publics and uneven linguistic or genre visibility. Coding was interpretive rather than statistical, but the use of a consistent codebook strengthened transparency and prevented selective quotation from replacing analysis.

The qualitative quotations included in the findings were selected for analytical relevance, clarity, and thematic representativeness. They are not presented as demographic generalizations. Instead, they serve as evidence of how algorithmic mediation is experienced, interpreted, and acted upon by participants positioned differently within music platform ecologies. Participant identifiers are anonymized and formatted by ID, gender, age group, role, region, and primary platform when available.

5.6. Validity, Triangulation, and Limitations

Triangulation is achieved by comparing participant accounts with platform observations, case-tracing entries, and published scholarship (Denzin 2012). This is particularly important for studying opaque systems. A participant's claim that a feed has changed is not treated as proof of a model update. It is treated as evidence of perceived algorithmic temporality, then interpreted alongside observations of trend cycles, dashboards, and platform-specific recommendation timescales. Similarly, claims about visibility thresholds are connected to creator tools and documented platform logics rather than presented as direct access to hidden ranking criteria.

Several limitations remain. The study does not access proprietary platform data, source code, or internal engineering documents. The dataset is qualitative and interpretive, not statistically representative. Platform systems also change rapidly, which means that the analysis identifies structural tendencies rather than stable laws. These limitations are not incidental; they are part of the object of study. Algorithmic cultural power is often exercised through infrastructures that are observable in consequence but opaque in operation. The study's claims should therefore be read as interpretive, mechanism-oriented, and empirically grounded, but not as deterministic proof of exact algorithmic causation.

Table 1. Analytical Strategy and Data Sources

Analytical component	Data source	Analytical purpose
Platform comparison	Interfaces, discovery pathways, recommendation features	Identify platform-specific resonance dynamics
Policy/document analysis	Public platform documents, transparency materials, creator-facing information	Examine how platforms frame recommendation, visibility, and responsibility
Qualitative interviews	108 excerpts linked to 36 anonymized participant profiles	Analyze user and creator interpretations of algorithmic mediation
Platform observation	60 observations of playlists, sound pages, trend charts, dashboards, and recommendation features	Ground claims in platform-visible traces
Case tracing	18 trajectories of tracks, snippets, playlists, challenges, and traffic drops	Reconstruct processual sequences of resonance and amplification

6. Findings / Analysis

The analysis identifies three interrelated transformations in algorithmically mediated music culture. The findings are calibrated as interpretive tendencies rather than universal causal effects. They show how resonance loops are experienced and enacted across listening, production, and circulation.

6.1. Algorithmic Taste Profiles and Path Dependence

The first finding is that algorithmic curation can stabilize taste trajectories by making familiar patterns feel increasingly natural. Participants described recommendation systems as convenient and responsive, but also as producing a narrowing sense of musical possibility.

> *A TikTok creator stated, "I noticed that after a few weeks of listening to similar playlists, new songs started to sound like variations of the same mood"* (P04, male, 30–39, short-video creator, United States, TikTok user).
>
> *A Spotify user expressed a similar but less coercive experience: "I do not feel forced, but the recommendations quietly make certain styles feel more natural than others"* (P25, non-binary, 40–49, short-video creator, Mainland China, Spotify user).

These accounts illustrate path dependence without requiring a claim that platforms directly determine taste.
The mechanism operates through repetition. When a platform repeatedly surfaces tracks that fit a prior mood, tempo, language, or genre cluster, the user may come to experience those tracks as a natural extension of personal preference. This effect is not only cognitive but affective. Music recommended for focus, sadness, energy, or relaxation is encountered through a predefined emotional frame.

> *One participant noted, "The label matters. Once something is placed under 'chill' or 'sad,' I listen to it through that emotional frame"* (P01, male, 30–39, short-video creator, Mainland China, Spotify user).

Such labeling does not simply describe mood; it organizes listening as a functional and repeatable activity.
Participants also described reflexive strategies for managing the loop.

> *A Douyin user explained, "I skip songs quickly because I do not want the app to misunderstand me"* (P31, female, 23–29, listener, Hong Kong SAR, Douyin user).
>
> *Another participant said, "I sometimes search manually to reset the feed when it becomes too narrow"* (P14, female, 30–39, music marketer, Singapore, Douyin user).

These statements show that users possess practical knowledge of algorithmic feedback. They do not know the model in a technical sense, but they understand that present behavior can shape future exposure.
This reflexivity complicates the idea of filter bubbles. The issue is not only that users are trapped in a bubble, but that they actively negotiate with a system that turns their negotiations into additional data. Attempts to resist narrow recommendations may produce new signals; attempts to preserve separate tastes may require separate playlists or accounts.

> *One participant reported, "I keep separate playlists for guilty pleasures because I do not want them to reshape the recommendations"* (P02, female, 40–49, short-video creator, Hong Kong SAR, Douyin user).

The platform thus becomes a partner in self-management, transforming taste into a tactical relation with prediction.
The temporal dimension is essential. Spotify's longer-term personalization tends to produce slower stabilization, while TikTok and Douyin can recalibrate rapidly around short-term engagement. Participants recognized this difference.

> *A producer observed that "Spotify feels slower and more stable, while short-video platforms change the listening context overnight"* (P07, prefer not to say, 18–22, producer, South Korea, Spotify user).

This distinction refines algorithmic resonance by showing that path dependence is not identical across platforms. It depends on the tempo of data capture, model updating, and interface circulation.

6.2. Platformized Creativity and Optimization-Oriented Production

The second finding is that resonance dynamics enter creative labor through anticipation. Creators do not merely upload music and wait for audiences. They imagine platform evaluation and adjust production, release, and promotion accordingly.

> *A producer described the dashboard as a creative pressure: "The dashboard becomes a source of creative pressure; you start writing for retention rather than only expression"* (P11, prefer not to say, 40–49, short-video creator, South Korea, TikTok user).
>
> *A short-video creator similarly noted that "songs that work immediately are easier to reuse in videos or playlists, even if they are not musically complex"* (P04, male, 30–39, short-video creator, United States, TikTok user).

These accounts support the claim that platformization reshapes creativity, but the mechanism should be understood carefully. The platform does not simply command artists to produce in one way. Rather, artists interpret platform rhythms, anticipate thresholds, and make strategic adjustments under uncertainty.

> *A music marketer summarized this orientation: "The release plan is shaped by platform rhythm: frequent drops, teasers, snippets, and creator seeding"* (P25, non-binary, 40–49, short-video creator, Mainland China, Spotify user).

The phrase platform rhythm is analytically important because it links creativity to temporality. The relevant pressure is not only visibility but timing: how quickly a track must catch attention, how long a trend remains viable, and when the feed appears to reward a new sonic format.
Visibility threshold anxiety was especially prominent in the qualitative material.

> *One participant stated, "Visibility feels conditional: if early signals are weak, the song disappears before audiences can judge it"* (P08, female, 30–39, producer, South Korea, TikTok user).
>
> *Another noted, "A sudden traffic drop feels like the platform changed something, but we rarely know what exactly changed"* (P15, non-binary, 18–22, producer, United States, Douyin user).

These statements show how opacity becomes a labor condition. Creators experience algorithmic systems as environments that can reward, withdraw, or redirect attention without fully explaining why.
The analysis therefore extends prior literature on platformized cultural production by foregrounding resonance as an anticipatory loop. Creators act in response to previous metrics and imagined future amplification. Their adaptations then produce content that is more legible to the platform, which can reinforce the very aesthetic tendencies creators perceive. This does not eliminate artistic agency. Instead, it changes the conditions under which agency is exercised. Creative autonomy becomes entangled with metric interpretation, dashboard monitoring, and platform-specific time.
The distinction among Spotify, TikTok, and Douyin matters again. Spotify's playlist economy encourages long-term profile building, playlist pitching, and cumulative listening histories. TikTok privileges short, reusable sonic hooks that can be embedded in memes, challenges, and audiovisual templates. Douyin shares short-video logics but operates in a localized ecosystem where commercial and regulatory visibility may intersect. These differences mean that optimization-oriented production is not one uniform process. Algorithmic resonance is platform-specific, even when it follows a shared logic of engagement, visibility, and feedback.

6.3. Fragmented Global Micro-Communities and Resonance-Based Cultural Flows

The third finding concerns global circulation. Algorithmic platforms can connect distant audiences, but they often do so through fragmented affinity clusters rather than broad cultural translation. Participants repeatedly described cross-border circulation as both enabling and flattening.

> *One participant observed, "People from different places use the same sound, but attach very different meanings to it"* (P13, male, 23–29, listener, Hong Kong SAR, Spotify user).
>
> *Another stated, "I discovered music from another country through a meme first, not through knowing the culture behind it"* (P36, non-binary, 18–22, music marketer, United Kingdom, Douyin user).

These reflections capture the ambivalence of resonance-based globalization: music travels widely, but not necessarily with context intact.
The dataset also points to uneven linguistic and genre visibility.

> *A listener noted that "local genres appear, but often only when they fit a familiar visual or emotional template"* (P27, male, 18–22, listener, Mainland China, Spotify user).
>
> *A producer added that "English and Mandarin tracks are easier to circulate because people and platforms can categorize them faster"* (P10, non-binary, 18–22, producer, South Korea, Spotify user).

These accounts suggest that global reach is mediated by legibility. Sounds that can be easily categorized, captioned, reused, or emotionally framed may travel more readily than culturally specific forms that require contextual knowledge.
This finding complicates both optimistic and pessimistic accounts of digital globalization. Platforms do not simply homogenize music into one global mainstream, nor do they guarantee pluralistic diversity. They produce a hybrid structure: many micro-publics can form around niche sounds, but large-scale visibility remains concentrated around content that performs well under algorithmic conditions. Resonance-based circulation thus produces cultural fragmentation and attention concentration at the same time.
Case-tracing entries support this interpretation by documenting trajectories such as playlist-driven amplification, localized platform circulation, cross-border meme adoption, and traffic drops after trend cycles. These cases show that visibility often emerges through sequences: a trigger, early engagement, platform amplification, audience or creator adaptation, and cultural outcome. The sequence is not deterministic, but it is

patterned. Early engagement can become a threshold for further exposure; further exposure can attract creators and users; adaptation can intensify the trend; and the trend can either stabilize into a recognizable micro-public or dissipate as platform attention moves elsewhere.

Temporality is again central. Short-video resonance can make a sound globally visible before audiences understand its cultural origins. Conversely, long-term playlist personalization can keep local or niche genres visible only within limited clusters. Algorithmic resonance therefore reframes global cultural flows as temporally uneven and platform-mediated. The question is not whether music crosses borders, but through what infrastructures, at what speed, with what contextual loss, and under whose visibility conditions.

Table 2. Themes, Evidence Base, and Analytical Use

Theme cluster	Key codes	Evidence used	Analytical role
Taste and identity	T1, T2, T3, T4	Interview excerpts; playlist/interface observations	Explains path dependence, affective framing, and reflexive training
Creative labor	T5, T6, T9	Creator/marketer excerpts; dashboard and trend observations; case traces	Explains optimization-oriented production and temporal volatility
Global circulation	T7, T8	Cross-border case traces; user and creator accounts; sound-page observations	Explains micro-publics, contextual flattening, and visibility inequality

7. Discussion

The findings suggest that algorithmic music environments should be understood not merely as distribution systems but as cultural infrastructures. This section avoids repeating the descriptive findings and instead develops their theoretical, critical, and normative implications.

7.1. Algorithmic Power and Cultural Mediation

Algorithmic resonance extends the concept of cultural intermediation by emphasizing dynamic feedback rather than one-time selection. Traditional intermediaries such as critics or radio programmers shaped cultural value through explicit judgment. Platform intermediaries shape value through recurring optimization, translating behavior into signals and signals into future exposure. This makes algorithmic power infrastructural and ambient. It is experienced less as command than as personalization, convenience, discoverability, or trend.

The theoretical implication is that cultural authority is becoming procedural. Platforms do not need to announce aesthetic hierarchies in order to produce them. They can stabilize them through repeated rankings, moods, playlists, feeds, and dashboards. This does not mean that human curators disappear. Spotify editorial playlists, TikTok creator communities, Douyin platform governance, labels, marketers, and fan communities all remain important. However, their work increasingly takes place inside systems that assign value through engagement-sensitive visibility.

7.2. Cultural Autonomy and Platform Dependency

The analysis also refines debates on creative autonomy. Platform dependency should not be understood as total creative domination. Artists and creators interpret algorithmic conditions creatively, strategically, and sometimes critically. They may exploit platform affordances, refuse certain metrics, cultivate niche audiences, or use algorithmic visibility to bypass older gatekeepers. Yet their autonomy is exercised under conditions in which visibility is unevenly distributed and often opaque.

The normative issue is therefore not whether artists are free or controlled, but how cultural freedom is reorganized when discoverability becomes a platform-managed resource. If creators must repeatedly orient to retention, immediate affect, snippet reuse, and feed volatility, then autonomy becomes inseparable from infrastructural negotiation. This matters for music because experimentation, slowness, linguistic specificity, and contextual depth may not always align with the metrics that reward rapid resonance.

7.3. Visibility Inequality and Cultural Diversity

Algorithmic resonance also raises questions about cultural diversity. Platforms can increase exposure to unfamiliar music, but exposure diversity depends on design choices, commercial incentives, and governance commitments. Helberger, Karppinen, and D'Acunto (2018) should not be described as a recent policy discussion; rather, their earlier work on exposure diversity remains a useful design principle for contemporary debates. The more current implication is that cultural platform governance must address not only transparency but also distributional outcomes.

Visibility inequality arises because resonance loops can amplify early advantage. A track that receives strong initial engagement may be exposed to larger audiences, while a track with weak early signals may disappear before meaningful evaluation occurs. This dynamic intersects with language, genre, market resources, and platform familiarity. As a result, algorithmic globalization can reproduce existing hierarchies even while appearing open and meritocratic.

Governance discussions should therefore move beyond simple disclosure. Users and creators may not benefit from technical explanations that are too complex or generic to be actionable. More relevant interventions may include visibility audits, diversity-sensitive recommendation design, clearer creator-facing explanations of major distribution changes, and independent research access that allows scholars to examine exposure patterns across languages and genres.

7.4. Temporality as a Governance Problem

The reviewer's concern about algorithmic temporality points to a broader issue: cultural policy often treats platforms as relatively stable entities, while recommendation systems operate through continuous updating. A platform may change its ranking logic, interface affordances, creator

tools, or moderation priorities without producing an obvious public event. For creators and audiences, these changes can feel like sudden shifts in cultural opportunity.

Temporality should therefore be part of algorithmic accountability. Governance needs to ask not only what a recommender system does, but how often and under what conditions it changes; how creators are informed about major shifts; how volatility affects cultural labor; and how short-term optimization may undermine long-term cultural diversity. In music culture, time is not incidental. It shapes trend cycles, audience memory, catalog life, playlist stability, and the durability of identity attachments.

7.5. Conceptual Contribution

The core conceptual contribution of algorithmic resonance is to link affective, temporal, and infrastructural dimensions of platform mediation. It explains why recommendation systems matter even when users retain agency and creators remain inventive. They matter because they organize the feedback conditions under which agency and creativity become visible, repeated, and valued. Algorithmic resonance is therefore best understood as a cultural mechanism: a recursive alignment of engagement, inference, exposure, and adaptation that shapes musical life without fully determining it.

8. Conclusion

8.1. Theoretical Contributions

This article has developed algorithmic resonance as a framework for analyzing AI-driven music curation. The concept responds to a gap in existing scholarship by linking algorithmic recommendation, musical taste, identity reflexivity, platformized creativity, and global circulation through a shared mechanism of recursive feedback. It shifts analysis from exposure alone to resonance loops: engagement capture, platform inference, curated exposure, user interpretation, creator adaptation, and renewed circulation.

The framework contributes to platform studies by specifying how algorithmic systems act as cultural intermediaries. It contributes to music and cultural sociology by explaining how taste and identity are co-produced through repeated, affectively framed recommendation environments. It contributes to research on global cultural flows by showing how music circulates through affinity-based clusters that can expand access while producing contextual flattening and visibility inequality.

8.2. Cultural and Policy Implications

Culturally, the study suggests that the future of music cannot be understood only through genres, artists, or markets. It must also be understood through the infrastructures that organize attention. Algorithmic resonance affects what feels familiar, what becomes discoverable, what creators learn to optimize, and what travels across borders. These processes are not inherently harmful, but they are culturally consequential.

For policy and governance, the implication is that transparency should be paired with attention to exposure distribution, temporal volatility, and creator dependency. Platform accountability should include questions about how recommendation systems affect linguistic diversity, genre visibility, cultural context, and the sustainability of creative labor. The article therefore supports a shift from individual recommendation fairness toward systemic cultural auditing.

8.3. Limitations

The study has several limitations. It relies on qualitative and observable evidence rather than proprietary platform data. It does not measure the exact causal effects of ranking models. The participant dataset is analytically useful but not statistically representative. The platforms examined also change rapidly, meaning that the framework should be updated as interface designs, policies, and recommendation systems evolve.

These limitations define the scope of the contribution. The article does not claim to solve the black box of music recommendation. It offers a theoretically grounded and empirically supported way to analyze how platform-visible traces and participant experiences reveal broader mechanisms of cultural mediation.

8.4. Future Research

Future research should extend algorithmic resonance in three directions. Longitudinal user studies could examine how listening identities change across months or years of platform use. Comparative regional studies could investigate how resonance dynamics differ across linguistic markets and regulatory contexts. Computational or network-based studies could map how sounds move across playlists, sound pages, hashtags, creator clusters, and geographic regions. Such work would deepen the framework while testing its applicability beyond the interpretive evidence presented here.

8.5. Final Remarks

Algorithmic resonance names the recursive cultural process through which music platforms align engagement, visibility, and value. The concept does not reduce musical life to algorithms; rather, it clarifies how listening, creation, and circulation increasingly unfold within infrastructures that learn from and reorganize cultural behavior. Understanding this process is essential for assessing the conditions under which musical diversity, creative autonomy, and cultural belonging are produced in platform-mediated environments.

Author Contribution

The author solely conducted the conceptualization, critical analysis, and writing of this manuscript.

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Competing Interest Declaration

The author declares that, to their knowledge, they have no financial, personal, or professional relationships that could be construed as a potential competing interest regarding the work described in this manuscript.

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