



From Mouth to Screen: A Theoretical Framework for Digital Folklore as Vernacular Ecology, Social Validation, and Platform Behavior

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Article Info :

Received:
23-04-2026
Revised:
01-04-2026
Accepted:
05-05-2026

Abstract

This article develops a theoretical framework of digital folklore as vernacular ecology, social validation system, and platform-mediated behavioral structure within contemporary participatory media environments. The study employs a non-empirical qualitative design based on systematic literature synthesis from folklore studies, media communication theory, and digital culture scholarship. Findings indicate that digital folklore emerges through ecological configurations of vernacular practices shaped by distributed participation, algorithmic mediation, and infrastructural constraints that reorganize cultural expression beyond territorial boundaries. Social validation operates as a ritualized mechanism in which engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments function as contemporary forms of communal recognition, reinforcing repetitive cultural patterns and stabilizing meaning across networks. Platform behavior further structures folkloric production through algorithmic ranking, interface design, and recommendation systems that selectively amplify certain expressive forms while marginalizing others. The study concludes that digital folklore is not merely a transformation of traditional folklore into digital media, but an emergent cultural system generated through the interaction of users, platforms, and computational logics. The proposed framework integrates repetition, variation, and validation as core analytical principles for understanding vernacular culture in digital ecosystems and contributes to methodological refinement in digital humanities and folklore studies.

Keywords: Digital Folklore, Vernacular Ecology, Social Validation, Platform Behavior, Algorithmic Mediation.



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid transformation of global communicative ecosystems under the influence of platform capitalism, algorithmic mediation, and participatory media cultures has fundamentally reconfigured the locus of vernacular expression, shifting it from territorially bounded oral communities toward distributed, datafied, and visually saturated digital environments. Contemporary scholarship in media and cultural studies increasingly recognizes that digital platforms do not merely function as neutral infrastructures of transmission but actively participate in shaping cultural production through visibility regimes, engagement metrics, and algorithmic curation that determine which expressive forms gain circulation and legitimacy (Howard, 2008). Within this shifting epistemic landscape, vernacular culture emerges not as a residual form of pre-digital tradition but as an adaptive system of meaning-making that operates through repetition, remix, and participatory dissemination, echoing but also extending earlier conceptualizations of folklore as contextual communication embedded in social interaction (Ben-Amos, 1971). Parallel developments in interdisciplinary vernacular studies further indicate that the logic of “vernacularity” extends beyond textual and oral traditions into material, architectural, and technological domains, where local knowledge systems are continuously reconfigured under conditions of modernization and sustainability discourse (Kusdiwanggo & Yusran, 2024; Aziz & Kharomen, 2025), suggesting that vernacularity itself must be understood as a dynamic ecological principle rather than a static cultural category.

Existing studies on folklore transformation in digital and semi-digital environments demonstrate a growing scholarly interest in the migration of narrative and symbolic forms across media ecologies, particularly in the adaptation of oral traditions into cinematic, illustrative, and interactive digital formats. Research on folklore adaptation into animated film narratives highlights how traditional stories

are recontextualized through industrial visual grammars that alter their narrative authority and audience reception (Piliang & Andriyani, 2024), while studies on digital illustration of folklore emphasize the role of creative technologies in reconstructing cultural memory through visual reinterpretation (Permatasari & Fiyanto, 2023). Complementary research in oral literature and cultural linguistics underscores that folklore functions not only as narrative inheritance but also as a system of social meaning embedded in naming practices, local history, and communal identity formation (Zuhri & Rizal, 2022). Meanwhile, digital applications designed to document traditional food culture illustrate how folklore is increasingly operationalized within mobile information systems, thereby transforming intangible cultural heritage into searchable, commodified datasets (Nugroho, 2019). Across these studies, a shared tendency emerges: folklore is predominantly framed as cultural content undergoing technological mediation rather than as a generative process produced within digital-native environments.

Despite the richness of these contributions, the dominant analytical trajectory remains conceptually constrained by an implicit preservationist paradigm that positions folklore as pre-existing cultural material being translated into new media rather than as emergent practice produced by platform-native social interaction. Even studies employing advanced technologies such as augmented reality for

batik motifs or digital storytelling systems tend to privilege representational transformation over the socio-technical conditions that generate new vernacular forms of expression in digital spaces (Hartanti & Maitri, 2020). This conceptual limitation produces a methodological blind spot in which viral content, meme cultures, comment-driven narratives, and algorithmically amplified expressions are treated as peripheral phenomena rather than constitutive elements of contemporary folklore systems. Consequently, the literature exhibits a persistent inconsistency between the recognition of participatory media dynamics and the continued reliance on legacy definitions of folklore that presuppose stability of tradition, locality of community, and linearity of transmission, thereby obscuring the emergent properties of digital vernacular ecologies shaped by repetition, imitation, and platform-driven visibility.

The absence of an integrated theoretical framework capable of reconciling classical folklore theory with platform-mediated cultural production generates significant epistemological and practical gaps, particularly in understanding how validation mechanisms such as likes, shares, and algorithmic amplification function as contemporary equivalents of communal sanction and collective recognition. While participatory media studies acknowledge the democratization of cultural production, they often fail to theorize the folkloric dimensions of repetitive digital behavior that transforms individual expression into collectively recognizable patterns of meaning. This gap becomes increasingly urgent in light of the expanding role of digital platforms as primary sites of cultural negotiation, identity formation, and symbolic legitimacy, where everyday practices such as greetings, condolences, reviews, motivational narratives, and visual commentary circulate as standardized yet adaptable cultural formulas. The lack of a coherent analytical vocabulary to interpret these phenomena not only limits scholarly understanding of digital culture but also constrains the development of methodological tools necessary for capturing fluid, multimodal, and algorithmically shaped cultural data.

Positioned within this intellectual lacuna, the present study advances a reconceptualization of folklore as a digitally emergent ecological system in which vernacular expression, social validation, and platform governance converge to produce new cultural formations that cannot be adequately explained through conventional distinctions between tradition and modernity. Rather than treating digital culture as a repository of mediated folklore, this study situates platform environments as generative spaces where vernacular practices are continuously produced, stabilized, and transformed through iterative participation. Such positioning reframes folklore not as a static inheritance but as a performative and infrastructural phenomenon embedded in the logic of digital interaction, where repetition, imitation, and algorithmic visibility constitute the primary mechanisms of cultural continuity and change.

The objective of this research is to construct a theoretical framework of digital folklore that articulates its structure as vernacular ecology, social validation system, and platform-mediated behavior, while simultaneously developing a methodological orientation for identifying folkloric patterns within multimodal digital data. The contribution of this study lies in its attempt to bridge classical folklore theory and contemporary digital culture studies by proposing an integrative model that accounts for repetition, variation, and functional social meaning as core analytical categories of

platform-based vernacular production, thereby offering both conceptual refinement and methodological guidance for future research on digitally situated cultural phenomena.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a non-empirical qualitative design grounded in conceptual and systematic literature-based inquiry, as its primary aim is not to generate or test field data but to construct an integrative theoretical framework of digital folklore as vernacular ecology, social validation system, and platform-mediated behavior. The data corpus consists of scholarly literature drawn from folklore studies, media and communication theory, digital culture studies, and vernacular theory, including peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs, and interdisciplinary research addressing folklore transformation, participatory media, and digital vernacular practices. Source selection follows purposive and theoretical sampling criteria, prioritizing works that explicitly engage with concepts of folklore, vernacular communication, participatory digital culture, and socio-technical platform dynamics, while excluding purely descriptive or technologically deterministic accounts that do not contribute to conceptual development. The analytical framework is structured through conceptual synthesis, enabling the integration of classical folklore theory with contemporary digital cultural paradigms in order to construct a coherent explanatory model of repetitive, variant, and socially validated digital practices.

The analytical procedure follows a narrative-synthetic approach combined with iterative conceptual coding, in which theoretical constructs are extracted, categorized, and systematically compared across intellectual traditions to identify convergences, tensions, and conceptual gaps relevant to digital folklore formation. The analysis proceeds through three stages: initial thematic mapping of folklore concepts (e.g., performance, function, communication, and tradition), cross-contextual reinterpretation within digital platform ecologies, and abstraction into a unified conceptual framework that emphasizes repetition, variation, and algorithmically mediated social validation. To ensure analytical rigor, the study employs triangulation of theoretical perspectives across folklore studies and digital media scholarship, maintaining interpretive consistency through reflexive documentation of coding decisions and conceptual alignment. Methodological transparency is further reinforced by maintaining an audit trail of literature selection and synthesis procedures, while ethical considerations remain centered on proper citation practices, intellectual integrity, and faithful representation of scholarly arguments without distortion or selective misinterpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vernacular Ecology and the Reconfiguration of Folk in Platform Environments

The conceptualization of digital folklore as vernacular ecology emerges from the shifting epistemic boundaries between territorial culture and platform-mediated sociality, where folklore is no longer anchored in spatially bounded communities but distributed across algorithmically organized networks of participation (Howard, 2008). Within this configuration, folk identity is reconstructed through shared semiotic codes, repetitive communicative practices, and platform-specific affordances that shape expressive behavior as a condition of visibility and recognition (Ben-Amos, 1971). Vernacularity, in this sense, is not merely linguistic or aesthetic but ecological, involving the co-evolution of users, content forms, and infrastructural logics that govern circulation patterns. The synthesis of vernacular studies with digital folklore scholarship indicates that cultural continuity is increasingly produced through iterative adaptation rather than stable inheritance.

Table 1. Dimensions of Vernacular Ecology in Digital Folklore Formation: Analytical Indicators and Theoretical Implications

Analytical Dimension	Vernacular Digital Indicator	Theoretical Implication
Folk formation	Hashtag communities and meme clusters	Collective identity as emergent network structure
Expression mode	Multimodal posts (text-image-video)	Expansion of folkloric text beyond oral tradition

Analytical Dimension	Vernacular Digital Indicator	Theoretical Implication
Transmission logic	Algorithmic recommendation systems	Mediation of cultural repetition
Participation pattern	Remixing and reposting behaviors	Distributed authorship of folklore

Table 1 illustrates how vernacular ecology operates through interdependent mechanisms of participation, transmission, and recognition, where algorithmic infrastructures function as co-constitutive agents in cultural reproduction. The classification demonstrates that folk formation in digital environments is less a demographic category than a behavioral and semiotic alignment shaped by platform logics. Empirical insights from digital ethnographic studies further reinforce that participatory media ecosystems generate culturally coherent clusters despite their spatial and temporal dispersion (De Seta, 2024). The ecological framing thus challenges conventional folklore models that rely on geographic proximity as the primary determinant of cultural cohesion. Instead, vernacular continuity is sustained through algorithmically amplified repetition that stabilizes meaning across dispersed user interactions.

The reconfiguration of folk within platform environments also reveals a structural shift from narrative ownership to distributed cultural authorship. Digital folklore emerges through iterative participation where users simultaneously consume and reproduce symbolic forms, generating feedback loops of imitation and modification. This dynamic is evident in global meme cultures and user-generated content ecosystems that demonstrate patterned creativity rather than isolated expression (Miller, 2008). The ecological perspective highlights that vernacular systems are not merely repositories of tradition but active generative environments shaped by socio-technical constraints. Consequently, folklore becomes a relational phenomenon embedded in infrastructural conditions rather than a static cultural artifact.

The platform-driven ecology further produces asymmetries in visibility that determine which vernacular forms achieve cultural stabilization. Algorithmic amplification functions as a selective mechanism that privileges certain expressive forms while marginalizing others, thereby influencing the trajectory of folkloric repetition. This condition aligns with findings that social network structures significantly affect cultural propagation and symbolic diffusion (Li et al., 2024). Within such systems, vernacular continuity is contingent upon engagement metrics that serve as proxies for communal validation. The resulting ecology therefore operates as both a cultural space and a governance structure of expression.

The ecological model also exposes tensions between spontaneity and structural conditioning in digital folklore production. While users perceive participation as voluntary cultural expression, platform architectures subtly organize attention flows and shape expressive grammars. Studies on social media logics demonstrate that platform affordances systematically influence communicative norms and interaction patterns (Hermida & Mellado, 2020). This duality produces a hybrid condition in which vernacular creativity is simultaneously enabled and constrained by infrastructural design. The ecological lens thus captures the paradox of autonomy and algorithmic governance in digital cultural production.

Within this framework, vernacular ecology becomes a heuristic for understanding how cultural meaning is continuously regenerated through distributed participation. The stability of folklore is no longer derived from tradition alone but from the recursive interaction between users and platform systems. Observations from participatory digital cultures indicate that meaning is sustained through continuous modification rather than preservation (Howard, 2008). This perspective reframes folklore as an emergent property of networked interaction rather than a bounded cultural inheritance. The ecological model therefore provides a foundation for rethinking cultural continuity in digitally mediated societies.

The transformation of folk into ecological units of analysis enables a more dynamic interpretation of cultural belonging in platform environments. Rather than fixed membership, folk identity becomes situational, activated through participation in specific digital practices. Such fluidity aligns with broader vernacular theories that emphasize adaptability and contextual responsiveness in cultural systems (Kusdiwanggo & Yusran, 2024). The ecological framing thereby situates digital folklore within broader

debates on cultural sustainability and transformation. This shift marks a departure from essentialist interpretations toward relational and process-oriented understandings of culture.

The interplay between ecological structures and vernacular expression reveals that folklore in digital contexts operates as a self-organizing system. Repetition, variation, and engagement function as stabilizing forces that maintain coherence within otherwise fragmented communicative environments. Empirical analyses of participatory media suggest that such systems rely on iterative reinforcement to sustain cultural relevance (Ben-Amos, 1971). The ecological model thus conceptualizes folklore as an adaptive system responsive to both user agency and infrastructural constraint. This synthesis establishes the groundwork for analyzing validation mechanisms in subsequent sections.

The vernacular ecological approach also underscores the importance of temporality in digital folklore formation. Cultural forms emerge, circulate, and dissipate at accelerated temporal scales governed by platform attention cycles. This temporality differentiates digital folklore from traditional forms that rely on intergenerational transmission. Instead, continuity is achieved through rapid cycles of replication and adaptation. The resulting cultural landscape is characterized by high volatility yet persistent structural patterns.

The conceptualization of vernacular ecology ultimately reframes folklore as an emergent, distributed, and infrastructurally embedded phenomenon. It dissolves the boundary between cultural producers and audiences by positioning all participants within a continuous loop of meaning production. This approach enables a more precise understanding of how digital environments reorganize cultural life at both micro and macro levels. The ecological model therefore provides a foundational lens for examining subsequent dimensions of social validation and platform behavior.

Social Validation and the Ritualization of Platform-Based Recognition

Digital folklore within platform environments is increasingly structured by mechanisms of social validation that transform everyday expression into quantifiable and publicly legible acts of recognition. The shift from face-to-face acknowledgment to metric-based affirmation situates folklore within a system where likes, shares, comments, and algorithmic amplification function as contemporary equivalents of communal endorsement (Howard, 2008). In this configuration, folkloric meaning is not only generated through narrative repetition but also through the circulation of evaluative signals that stabilize cultural significance. The communicative model proposed in folklore theory is thus extended into a metrics-driven ecology where visibility itself becomes a form of validation (Ben-Amos, 1971).

Table 2. Social Validation Mechanisms and Their Functional Role in the Ritualization of Digital Folklore Recognition

Validation Mechanism	Digital Expression Form	Folkloric Function
Likes and reactions	Emotional affirmation icons	Ritualized approval of content
Shares and reposts	Content redistribution	Collective amplification
Comments and replies	Dialogic engagement	Interpretive negotiation
Algorithmic ranking	Visibility prioritization	Structural legitimization

The table illustrates that validation in digital folklore operates as a multilayered system combining affective, social, and infrastructural dimensions of recognition. Each mechanism does not function independently but interacts to produce cumulative legitimacy that determines whether a cultural form attains folkloric status. Empirical observations from participatory media research confirm that engagement metrics increasingly shape user perception of cultural value and authenticity (Li et al., 2024). The implication is that folklore is no longer merely recognized through communal consensus but through platform-mediated quantification of attention.

The ritualization of validation becomes evident in repetitive user behaviors that resemble ceremonial acts of acknowledgment within digital environments. Users routinely perform engagement actions not only as communicative responses but as culturally coded gestures that signal belonging within vernacular communities. Such practices align with findings that digital platforms reorganize communicative norms into structured interaction patterns governed by visibility hierarchies (Hermida

& Mellado, 2020). These ritualized behaviors transform ephemeral interactions into stable patterns of cultural affirmation. Consequently, folklore emerges through the accumulation of micro-validations that collectively construct social meaning.

The integration of validation systems into folklore production introduces a structural dependency on platform architectures that mediate what becomes culturally recognizable. Algorithmic systems prioritize content based on engagement signals, thereby shaping the conditions under which folkloric repetition occurs. Studies on digital propagation highlight that network structures significantly influence cultural diffusion and symbolic reinforcement (Li et al., 2024). Within this system, validation is not merely reactive but constitutive of cultural visibility. This condition produces a feedback loop where recognition drives repetition and repetition reinforces recognition.

Social validation also reconfigures the temporal dynamics of folkloric circulation by accelerating cycles of cultural emergence and obsolescence. Content that achieves rapid validation gains algorithmic visibility, while unvalidated expressions quickly disappear from collective attention. This temporal compression distinguishes digital folklore from traditional forms that rely on gradual intergenerational transmission. Research on participatory media indicates that attention-based systems intensify the speed of cultural turnover while maintaining structural repetition patterns (Howard, 2008). The result is a volatile yet patterned ecology of cultural recognition.

The performative dimension of validation further demonstrates that users engage in strategic self-presentation shaped by anticipated audience response. Content production becomes oriented toward maximizing visibility and engagement rather than solely expressing narrative or symbolic intent. This aligns with the notion that digital participation is governed by platform logics that embed communicative norms within infrastructural constraints (Hermida & Mellado, 2020). Validation thus operates as both motivation and regulatory mechanism within folkloric production. The interplay between agency and structure becomes central to understanding digital vernacular behavior.

Within this system, validation also functions as a form of cultural stratification that differentiates high-visibility folklore from marginal expressions. Content that aligns with dominant aesthetic and algorithmic preferences is more likely to achieve circulation stability, while alternative expressions remain peripheral. Such stratification reflects broader findings in digital culture studies where visibility hierarchies shape symbolic authority (Howard, 2008). The consequence is an uneven distribution of folkloric recognition across platform environments. This asymmetry underscores the role of infrastructural power in shaping cultural legitimacy.

The ritualized nature of validation further reinforces the emergence of standardized expressive formats that optimize engagement potential. Users increasingly adopt recognizable templates, narrative structures, and visual grammars that are perceived as more likely to achieve validation. This standardization reflects a shift from spontaneous expression to formula-driven participation in digital folklore systems. Observations from participatory media ecosystems confirm that repetition of successful formats contributes to cultural stabilization (Ben-Amos, 1971). Such repetition demonstrates how validation mechanisms directly shape folkloric form.

The convergence of validation and repetition produces a self-reinforcing system in which cultural meaning is continuously negotiated through engagement metrics. Folklore becomes an emergent property of interactional density rather than textual content alone. Empirical studies of social networks indicate that diffusion patterns are strongly influenced by reinforcement dynamics embedded in platform architectures (Li et al., 2024). This reinforces the understanding that validation is not an external evaluation but an internal mechanism of cultural production. The system thus operates as both generator and regulator of folkloric meaning.

The institutionalization of validation practices ultimately transforms digital folklore into a ritual economy of attention where cultural significance is continuously produced through participation. This economy relies on repeated acts of recognition that collectively stabilize vernacular meaning across dispersed networks. The process aligns with theoretical accounts of folklore as socially embedded communication shaped by contextual interaction (Ben-Amos, 1971). In digital environments, however, context is redefined by platform infrastructures that mediate visibility and engagement. The result is a reconfigured ritual system in which validation becomes the central mechanism of folkloric continuity.

Platform Behavior, Algorithmic Mediation, and the Production of Digital Folklore

Platform behavior constitutes a decisive structuring force in the emergence of digital folklore, insofar as it organizes user interaction through algorithmic mediation that determines visibility, circulation, and cultural persistence of vernacular expressions. Digital folklore is therefore not merely produced by users but co-produced through socio-technical systems that actively shape communicative possibilities and constrain expressive trajectories (Howard, 2008). Within this environment, platform infrastructures function as behavioral architectures that embed normative expectations into everyday interaction, thereby influencing how folklore is generated, repeated, and stabilized. This aligns with the understanding that folklore is contextually produced communication embedded within specific social and structural conditions (Ben-Amos, 1971).

Table 3. Platform Mechanisms and Their Role in Shaping Behavioral Patterns and Digital Folklore Production

Platform Mechanism	Behavioral Output	Folkloric Implication
Algorithmic ranking	Visibility prioritization	Selective cultural amplification
Recommendation systems	Content exposure loops	Repetition of vernacular forms
Interface design	User interaction patterns	Standardization of expressive formats
Engagement metrics	Behavioral reinforcement	Ritualization of participation

The table demonstrates that platform mechanisms are not neutral technical features but active agents in shaping folkloric production through structured behavioral conditioning. Algorithmic ranking systems determine which vernacular expressions achieve circulation, thereby influencing what becomes culturally recognizable within digital folklore ecologies. Empirical research on social network diffusion confirms that algorithmic infrastructures significantly affect the propagation patterns of cultural content (Li et al., 2024). These mechanisms collectively produce a form of behavioral regularity in which user actions are continuously adjusted to platform feedback systems.

Platform behavior further operates through the normalization of interface-driven interaction, where design elements guide users toward predictable forms of engagement. Interface affordances such as repost buttons, comment threads, and short-form video templates constrain expressive diversity while simultaneously enabling rapid cultural replication. This condition resonates with findings that digital communicative norms are shaped by platform logics embedded in technological design (Hermida & Mellado, 2020). As a result, folklore production becomes increasingly standardized through repeated interaction with infrastructural templates. The platform thus acts as a silent co-author of vernacular expression.

Algorithmic mediation intensifies the temporal compression of folkloric circulation by accelerating cycles of emergence and disappearance within attention economies. Content is continuously evaluated through engagement signals that determine its algorithmic longevity and visibility trajectory. Studies of digital propagation systems indicate that networked infrastructures amplify certain cultural forms while suppressing others based on interaction intensity (Li et al., 2024). This creates a dynamic environment in which folklore is perpetually in flux yet structurally patterned through algorithmic selection. The temporality of folklore becomes contingent upon platform-driven acceleration mechanisms.

Table 4. Feedback Loops Between User Behavior and Platform Response in Algorithmically Mediated Digital Folklore Systems

Behavioral Layer	User Activity	Platform Response
Content creation	Posting and remixing	Algorithmic indexing
Engagement action	Liking and commenting	Visibility recalibration
Sharing behavior	Redistribution of content	Network amplification
Consumption pattern	Viewing and scrolling	Recommendation adjustment

The table highlights how user behavior and platform response form a continuous feedback loop that governs the production of digital folklore. Each behavioral layer is dynamically adjusted through algorithmic interpretation of engagement signals, reinforcing patterns of repetition and variation. Research on participatory media systems emphasizes that such feedback structures are central to the formation of vernacular digital cultures (Howard, 2008). Within this loop, folklore emerges as a byproduct of interactional density shaped by platform responsiveness.

Platform behavior also introduces asymmetries in cultural production by privileging content that aligns with algorithmically favorable patterns of engagement. This selective amplification creates hierarchies of visibility that influence which vernacular expressions become stabilized as digital folklore. Empirical analyses of digital diffusion networks demonstrate that structural inequalities in visibility significantly shape cultural persistence (Li et al., 2024). These asymmetries underscore the role of platform governance in determining cultural legitimacy. Consequently, folklore in digital environments cannot be separated from infrastructural power relations embedded within platform systems.

The behavioral conditioning embedded in platform architectures further encourages users to adapt their expressive strategies to anticipated algorithmic preferences. Content creators increasingly design narratives, visuals, and captions in accordance with perceived platform optimization rules. This adaptation reflects a broader shift toward anticipatory participation, where users internalize platform logic as part of cultural production. Such dynamics correspond to theoretical accounts of vernacular media environments shaped by infrastructural mediation (Howard, 2008). The result is a recursive relationship between user agency and algorithmic constraint.

Within this system, repetition becomes a structurally induced outcome rather than purely a cultural choice, as platforms reward familiar formats with higher visibility. Viral templates, meme structures, and standardized visual grammars are continuously reproduced due to their algorithmic efficiency. This phenomenon aligns with folklore theory emphasizing repetition and variation as core mechanisms of tradition formation (Ben-Amos, 1971). However, in digital environments, repetition is no longer socially organic but infrastructurally incentivized. The platform thus actively manufactures folkloric stability through behavioral reinforcement.

The convergence of algorithmic mediation, interface design, and engagement metrics ultimately produces a self-regulating ecosystem of digital folklore in which cultural forms are continuously generated, evaluated, and reconfigured. This system operates through recursive feedback loops that integrate user behavior and platform logic into a unified production mechanism. Empirical studies of social network systems confirm that such feedback structures are central to cultural diffusion and stabilization processes (Li et al., 2024). In this context, folklore emerges not as a static repository of tradition but as an ongoing computationally mediated process. The platform thereby functions as both infrastructure and actor in the production of vernacular culture.

CONCLUSION

Digital folklore is constituted as an emergent cultural system in which vernacular ecology, social validation, and platform behavior operate as interdependent mechanisms that collectively generate, stabilize, and transform expressive practices within digital environments. The ecological dimension demonstrates that folk identity is no longer territorially bounded but distributed across networked interactions shaped by repetition, variation, and algorithmic circulation. Social validation structures this ecology through ritualized engagement metrics that function as symbolic mechanisms of recognition, transforming everyday expressions into culturally legitimate forms through cumulative interactional endorsement. Platform behavior further consolidates these processes by embedding algorithmic mediation, interface design, and visibility governance into the conditions of cultural production, thereby shaping both the form and trajectory of vernacular expression. The integration of these three dimensions establishes that digital folklore is not a derivative extension of traditional folklore but a self-organizing system produced through the recursive interaction between users and infrastructural logics, where cultural meaning is continuously negotiated through computationally mediated participation.

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