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How the Platform-Creator Dyadic Relationship Reconfigures Internet Communication Power in the Boom of Generative AI Visual Media Creation

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Abstract. This article examines the platform-creator dyadic relationship that has taken shape around generative AI visual media. Rather than asking only whether AIGC (Artificial Intelligence Generated Content) lowers the technical threshold of image and video production, it asks how platforms rearrange Internet communication power through infrastructure, algorithms, data capture, and visibility allocation. Drawing on Manuel Castells's theory of communication power, the study develops a three-part account of production power, distribution power, and definitional power in AIGC platforms. The analysis combines theoretical interpretation, public platform cases, and practice-based observation. It argues that AIGC platforms do not simply de-professionalise or decentralise creation. Their low-threshold rhetoric invites ordinary users into visual production, but it also obscures the continuing value of professional expertise. Platform control over models, credits, computing resources, and interfaces then turns creative capacity into a conditionally accessible service. Algorithmic black boxes and traffic recommendation systems further shape how works circulate, are evaluated, and acquire value. AIGC platforms therefore widen entry while re-concentrating key forms of production, distribution, and definitional power. The study offers a cautious framework for creators, platform observers, and scholars of communication power.

Keywords: AIGC, communication power, platform-creator relationship, visibility allocation

1. Introduction

Generative AI visual media has moved from experimental demonstration into everyday platform culture with unusual speed. Large technology companies release new models in compressed cycles, while creators from professional and non-professional backgrounds publish AIGC (Artificial Intelligence Generated Content) visual works on short-video platforms, social media, and community sites. These works now range from stylised images to short narrative videos, and they accumulate views, comments, remixes, and other interaction data that feed back into platform economies.

At first glance, this technical shift seems to unsettle the professional barriers that long organised film and television production. A user can now type a prompt and receive an image or video that

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would once have required capital, labour, equipment, and specialist coordination. That appearance matters. It encourages the view that AIGC visual media has opened high-quality visual creation to ordinary users and weakened the monopoly of professional production systems.

Access, however, is not the same as control. Platform owners often use free trials, credit gifts, and temporary access to advanced models to cultivate habits of use. Once creators rely on these systems, higher model quality, faster generation, and stable computing resources usually become paid or restricted services. Recommendation systems add another layer of dependence: by controlling whether works can be found, promoted, or ignored, platforms also shape creators' aesthetic choices.

The study takes this tension as its starting point. It looks past the optimistic narrative of de-professionalisation and decentralisation and treats the platform-creator relationship as a site where communication power is reorganised. For creators and for researchers of AIGC, the key issue is not simply whether AI makes production easier, but who sets the conditions under which this easier production becomes visible, valuable, and sustainable.

2. Literature review

Generative AI visual media is no longer a peripheral experiment in visual production. Film and media practitioners, individual creators on Douyin and Xiaohongshu, and other user-generated content communities have all begun to use AI tools to make and circulate AIGC works. Much of the existing discussion reads this development through the language of opportunity: lower thresholds, more user-generated content, and new creative markets. From that perspective, AI-generated content appears likely to become a durable force in future artistic production [1].

Castells's theory of communication power provides the conceptual starting point for this article. In Communication Power, power is not located only in formal institutions; it also operates through communication networks that shape the public mind. Discourses, values, and frames enter public attention through those networks, and public attention then influences individual and collective behaviour. For Castells, actors who organise networks, set their rules, and connect them to other networks hold programming and switching power [2]. In the AIGC platform context, this article translates that insight into three analytical dimensions: production power, or control over the conditions of generation; distribution power, or control over what becomes visible; and definitional power, or control over what is recognised as valuable creation.

Research on generative AI risk has developed along several lines rather than one settled agenda. One line examines governance problems such as regulation, copyright, privacy, and misinformation [3]. Another focuses on creative subjects and cultural meaning, including authorship, ownership, ethical boundaries, and reception [4]. A further body of work approaches the problem from technical transparency and black-box decision-making, warning that opacity can weaken trust, accountability, and governance [5]. These debates identify important risks, yet they tend to treat governance, ethics, and technical opacity as relatively separate problems.

What remains less developed is the platform-creator relation itself. Existing studies often move either upward to institutional governance or inward to authorship and creative ethics. This article places the interaction between platforms and creators at the centre of analysis. It asks how AIGC content production is tied to Internet power relations, and how production power, distribution power, and definitional power are rearranged through platform infrastructure and algorithms. The purpose is not to reject the creative potential of AIGC, but to specify the conditions under which that potential is organised and constrained.

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3. Characteristics of the platform-creator dyadic relationship

3.1. The illusion of creative equality produced by the de-professionalization narrative

Generative AI tools compress parts of professional visual production into textual prompting. That compression can look like de-professionalisation: fewer specialised procedures, less equipment, and a more accessible entry point. Yet access to the interface does not mean equal creative capacity. Users with training in film, visual design, or related fields are still more likely to understand composition, style, rhythm, and the limits of the tool. The claim of rapid creative equality is therefore partly a platform effect.

Platforms often turn this effect into publicity. Runway's "what you say is what you see" rhetoric, for example, presents text-to-video generation as almost immediate translation from language to image. The appeal of that message is clear, but it also shifts attention away from professional training and industrial workflows. Natural language appears to replace visual expertise, even though the quality of the output still depends on aesthetic judgement and iterative selection.

Empirical work on prompting supports this caution. Oppenlaender and colleagues show that prompt engineering is learned rather than intuitive: participants with art education, art appreciation experience, or a stronger command of terms for styles, movements, and techniques tended to produce higher-quality AI images [6]. In other words, AI tools reduce some operational barriers, but they do not remove the role of stylistic knowledge, visual judgement, or expressive capacity.

The creative equality promoted by platforms should therefore be read as a strategic narrative, not as a completed social condition. Ordinary users may obtain access to visual production, but the distance between casual users and professionally trained creators remains visible. Platform publicity foregrounds speed and low thresholds, while professional knowledge is pushed into the background. The platform then appears as the actor that helps users cross an old barrier, even as it defines what crossing that barrier means.

This assistance is also commercially useful. By drawing users into experimentation, platforms generate traffic, attention, feedback, and market visibility. User data can then be used to train models and refine product design. The de-professionalisation narrative works in two directions at once: it speaks the language of empowerment, and it prepares a user base that can later be folded into stronger forms of production control.

3.2. Production dependence on platform infrastructure

Lowering the threshold for visual creation does not make creative capacity independent. AIGC production still depends on models, computing resources, credits, interfaces, and permission settings supplied by the platform. The transfer is therefore limited. What users receive is not full ownership of production tools, but conditional access to an infrastructure that remains externally governed.

Pricing makes this dependence concrete. Mainstream AIGC video platforms commonly tie duration, resolution, generation speed, and model quality to subscription levels and credit consumption. Creators do not permanently possess the means of production; they rent access to resources whose prices and rules can change. A familiar creative action, generating a clip, is thus converted into a metered platform service.

The release of higher-quality models makes the arrangement easier to observe. After Seedance 2.0 was launched on Jimeng AI, reports indicated that credit-consumption rules were adjusted several times within a short period. For advanced members, the credit cost for a 15-second video rose from 45 to 120 and then to 210 [7]. Payment did not guarantee equal or immediate access

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either. During peak periods, ordinary members reportedly waited 6 to 8 hours for generation, while advanced members also encountered delays [8]. What is priced, then, is not only the number of outputs, but also speed, queue position, and proximity to better models.

This is why AIGC platforms cannot be understood as simply handing production tools to users. They convert generative capacity into a resource that can be measured, tiered, delayed, accelerated, and sold. Castells's account of communication power helps clarify the relation: power in network society involves setting goals and operating rules, and it also involves an asymmetrical capacity to influence others' decisions [2]. Users may still choose themes and prompts, but those choices are made inside a production network whose rules are written elsewhere.

Production dependence, in this sense, is not an accusation that creators lack skill. It describes the condition under which skill becomes usable. A creator's idea can be realised only through infrastructure controlled by the platform, and continued use requires continued acceptance of platform rules. The entry threshold is lowered, but control over the basic conditions of visual production is pulled back toward the platform.

3.3. High information asymmetry

After production dependence is formed, a second imbalance becomes more visible: creators know far less about the system than the system knows about them. The gap concerns algorithmic logic, data processing, and the criteria through which outputs are generated or filtered. Its clearest form is the black box around platform algorithms.

AIGC platforms provide prompt boxes and output windows, but they rarely expose the generative logic behind them. Users see an input and a result; they do not see training data, model weights, capability boundaries, or the ranking and filtering rules that affect generation. Part of this opacity is institutional, because these elements are protected as proprietary technologies and commercial secrets. Part of it is epistemic, because deep learning systems are technically difficult for non-specialists to interpret [9].

The opacity has practical consequences. When an output fails, creators usually cannot diagnose the model's internal reasoning. They test prompts, adjust parameters, regenerate images or clips, compare results, and try again. Each attempt consumes credits, computing resources, and time. The search for a better image therefore reinforces the production dependence described above rather than escaping it.

The asymmetry is not reciprocal. Creators may struggle to understand platform logic, while platforms can observe prompt-writing habits, selection preferences, downloads, sharing behaviour, and payment patterns. Pasquale's account of black-box systems is useful here: such systems use data about individuals to make decisions about them and to shape the decisions they make [10]. Runway's terms of use [11] similarly state that user inputs and outputs may be used to train and improve AI models and algorithms, and that related technologies, products, services, and platform development are also covered.

AIGC creation therefore involves a double payment. Users pay for access to infrastructure, and they also produce data that platforms can use to improve models, adjust prices, segment users, and build conversion mechanisms. The black box is not merely a technical problem of opacity. It is also a structural device through which platforms enlarge their informational advantage over creators.

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4. Visibility allocation and aesthetic discipline under traffic recommendation mechanisms

4.1. Visibility allocation: the platform's control of distribution power

Visibility is the next site where platform power becomes visible. AIGC platforms may make production easier, but a work's audience, ranking, and circulation still depend on platform allocation. Recommendation systems decide which works are surfaced and which remain marginal. Algorithms therefore function not only as technical sorting tools, but as gatekeeping arrangements for content visibility.

Castells's theory again helps explain the stakes. If communication power works through the shaping of the public mind, then recommendation algorithms are part of the machinery through which attention is organised [2]. They select, rank, and present content in ways that guide what users encounter as meaningful or worth noticing. In this sense, platforms act as organisers of communication power rather than neutral carriers of user expression.

Algorithm studies make the same problem more concrete. Gillespie argues that algorithms shape what counts as relevant in public life; they help users find information, but they also influence what is considered worth knowing and how publics participate [12]. Garajamirli extends this point in relation to digital ecosystems, where visibility depends on communicative opportunities distributed by platforms. Recommendation systems weigh factors such as virality potential, engagement, and advertising value, thereby redefining visibility [13]. On AIGC platforms, relevance is not discovered after creation; it is calculated as part of circulation.

Duffy and Meisner's research on social media creators shows how this allocation is experienced in practice. Platforms can punish creators through bans or shadowbans and reward them through exposure recommendations [14]. AIGC creators face a comparable arrangement. They may upload works, but visibility and revenue still depend on platform rules. Distribution power is therefore concentrated in the platform's capacity to decide which works are made visible and under what conditions.

4.2. Aesthetic discipline: the surrender of creative subjectivity

Under these conditions, platforms do not need to tell creators directly what to make. Visibility itself becomes a form of instruction. By rewarding some forms and burying others, platforms steer aesthetic orientation. Creators may experience this as a personal choice, but part of their creative subjectivity is being reorganised through platform feedback.

Castells describes power as the capacity to shape the human mind, since feeling and thought influence action [2]. Foucault's account of disciplinary power points in a similar direction. Discipline works less through direct violence than through visibility, observation, and evaluation, so that subjects begin to govern themselves according to external constraints [15]. On AIGC platforms, likes, views, revenue, and recommendation results become an evaluative environment. They tell creators, repeatedly and often without explicit instruction, which kinds of images or videos are worth pursuing.

AI-generated content makes this dynamic especially clear. Creators often return to high-traffic templates, recognisable themes, and familiar video structures, then revise through trial and error until the work fits platform visibility rules. Cotter calls this kind of adaptation the "visibility game": creators watch which content receives algorithmic rewards and gradually build strategies around those signals [16]. Over time, the question "what do I want to create?" is joined by another question:

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"what is likely to be recommended?" Platform metrics then move from external feedback into the creator's own aesthetic standard.

Platform distribution power therefore reaches beyond the question of whether a work is seen. It also shapes how work is imagined before it is made. Creative subjectivity does not vanish, but it is repeatedly adjusted by algorithms, traffic metrics, and visibility-based returns. In this way, distribution power becomes definitional power: the power to influence what counts as effective, valuable, or high-quality creation.

5. Conclusion and implications

This paper has analysed how Internet communication power is reorganised in generative AI visual media creation. The platform-creator dyadic relationship shows a tension that simple technological optimism tends to miss. Generative AI lowers the threshold for entry, but it does not automatically deliver de-professionalisation or decentralised creative autonomy. Platforms attract users through low-threshold narratives, bind production to controlled infrastructure, and govern circulation through algorithmic black boxes, data collection, and visibility allocation. Access expands, while production power, distribution power, and definitional power are drawn back into platform systems.

The contribution of the study lies in changing the object of discussion. Instead of treating AIGC visual media only as a technical tool or an ethics problem, the article places platform relations and communication power at the centre. This perspective connects governance risks, authorship debates, algorithmic mechanisms, and relational structures within one analytical frame. It also shows why the language of technological empowerment can hide more durable forms of platform control.

For creators, the implication is practical as well as theoretical. Technical convenience should not be confused with creative autonomy. Platform rules, recommendation systems, pricing mechanisms, and data practices shape the conditions under which aesthetic judgement is exercised. For governance, the analysis points to algorithmic transparency, data use, creator rights, and fairness in traffic allocation as connected issues. A healthier ecology for generative AI visual media will depend on balancing technological innovation with platform responsibility and creator subjectivity.

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