



Designing affective multiplicities: a Bergsonian-Deleuzian framework for ethical praxis in global media

Diseñando multiplicidades afectivas: un marco bergsoniano-deleuziano para la praxis ética en los medios globales

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Abstract

Contemporary digital platforms are frequently critiqued as engines of attention extraction and cultural homogenization. This article addresses a gap in platform studies by proposing a Bergsonian-Deleuzian framework to analyze digital media as sites of “affective flow.” Adopting a meta-theoretical methodology grounded in philosophical hermeneutics, the study pursues a central research question: how do distinct digital media architectures engineer affective temporalities, and what are the ethical implications for global cultural circulation? It hypothesizes that platform designs mobilize Bergson’s *durée* and Deleuze’s affect images to manufacture qualitative experiences that exceed metric capture, and that cultural specificity functions as an affective intensifier rather than a barrier to global circulation. The study synthesizes empirical findings across three case studies: the algorithmic rhythm of TikTok, the haptic immersion of the VR narrative *The Wolves in the Walls*, and the curation of Indian streaming services. Key findings show how TikTok manufactures “synthetic duration,” how VR employs “subtractive perception” to generate affective depth, and how Indian streaming platforms enable global resonance by preserving culturally specific temporalities beyond linguistic boundaries. Consequently, the article outlines an Ethical Design Praxis grounded in “subtraction,” “multiplicity,” and “resonance without erasure”—a roadmap for resisting cultural flattening while enabling embodied resonance.

Keywords: affective flows, algorithmic governance, cultural resonance, *durée*, digital design.

Resumen

*Las plataformas digitales contemporáneas son frecuentemente criticadas como motores de extracción de atención y homogeneización cultural. Este artículo aborda un vacío en los estudios de plataformas proponiendo un marco bergsoniano-deleuziano para analizar los medios digitales como sitios de “flujo afectivo”. La pregunta central es: ¿cómo diseñan las arquitecturas de medios digitales temporalidades afectivas específicas y cuáles son sus implicaciones éticas para la circulación cultural global? Mediante una metodología metateórica, el estudio sintetiza hallazgos empíricos secundarios (2018–2025) en tres estudios de caso: el ritmo algorítmico de TikTok, la inmersión háptica de la narrativa de RV *The Wolves in the Walls* y la curación de los servicios de streaming indios. Los resultados demuestran cómo TikTok manufactura una “duración sintética”, cómo la RV emplea la “percepción sustractiva” para generar profundidad afectiva, y cómo las plataformas de streaming indias preservan temporalidades narrativas culturalmente específicas más allá de las fronteras lingüísticas. En consecuencia, el artículo propone una Praxis de Diseño Ético basada en los principios de “sustracción”, “multiplicidad” y “resonancia sin borrado”, ofreciendo una hoja de ruta especulativa para diseñar plataformas que resistan el aplanamiento cultural y permitan una resonancia encarnada global.*

Keywords: flujos afectivos, gobernanza algorítmica, resonancia cultural, diseño digital, *durée*.

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1. Introduction

Consider two moments of digital habitation. In the first, a commuter scrolls TikTok on a train, the thumb orchestrating a rapid sensory-motor loop—dances from Seoul, skits from Lagos, protests from New York—each flashing past in seconds. Time is not measured but felt as rhythmic compression: a continuous algorithmic present in which past and present blur into flow. In the second, a user stands in a living room wearing a VR headset, immersed in *The Wolves in the Walls*. Here, experience unfolds through haptic hesitation: the user reaches out to hand a virtual object to Lucy and must wait—inhabiting the space, enduring the pause. Time thickens, becoming tactile. Though products of the same digital epoch, these interfaces engineer radically different relations between body and time, constructing distinct affective flows that structure duration (*durée*) and embodiment rather than merely delivering content.

This divergence foregrounds the ontological stakes of media design. Against approaches that treat interfaces as neutral screens or texts to be decoded, this article argues that media design functions as an architecture of time and affect. The critical question thus shifts from what digital media represents to how it moves bodies—how it curates sensory-motor capacities to generate resonance across cultural boundaries.

Existing frameworks in media and communication studies struggle to account for this phenomenological dimension. Platform studies have offered essential political-economic analyses, detailing how algorithms quantify engagement, extract data, and govern sociality (Gillespie, 2010; van Dijck *et al.*, 2018, pp. 31–48). Critiques of surveillance capitalism similarly expose systemic mechanisms of control (Zuboff, 2019). Yet these approaches privilege measurement over experience, theorizing the quantified self while leaving the lived self under-examined. Digital engagement routinely exceeds its metrics, producing affective intensities—joy, anxiety, solidarity—that escape datafication (Massumi, 2002, pp. 27–30).

This limitation becomes especially acute in analyses of global media flows. Earlier frameworks positioned global media primarily as instruments of Western ideological transmission. Contemporary digital culture, however, reveals more complex dynamics structured by multidirectional contra-flows (Thussu, 2007, pp. 1–7), in which regionally situated forms—from Indian cinema to K-pop—circulate globally. The transnational resonance of Indian cinema, K-pop, and short-form video culture suggests that cultural transmission increasingly operates through pre-personal intensities—rhythms, gestures, and spectacles that bypass linguistic equivalence. Understanding these dynamics requires a framework that moves beyond semiotic analysis toward the somatic conditions of mediation.

To address this gap, the article develops a framework grounded in the philosophies of Henri Bergson and Gilles Deleuze. We argue that digital design is an ontological act that structures the body as a “center of indetermination” (Bergson, 1896, pp. 36–37), engineering the temporal conditions through which affect circulates. Bergson’s concept of *durée* reconceives time as qualitative continuity rather than divisible units, illuminating the immersive stickiness of platforms such as TikTok. His account of perception as subtractive—filtering the superfluous to orient action—clarifies the logic of immersive VR. These mechanics are synthesized with Deleuze’s concepts of the affect-image and assemblage (1986, pp. 65, 97; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) to examine how designed temporal architectures generate intensities capable of detaching from local contexts and re-embedding globally.

Against this conceptual background, this article is organized around the following research question: how do distinct digital media architectures engineer specific affective temporalities, and what are the ethical implications of this engineering for global cultural circulation? Two operational hypotheses guide the analysis. First, that the *durée*-based and affect-image-based design logics identified by Bergson and Deleuze remain analytically productive for contemporary interactive platforms, insofar as these platforms reproduce—in engineered form—the same tension between spatialized quantification and qualitative temporal experience that the philosophers diagnosed in the early twentieth century. Second, that cultural specificity, rather than being dissolved by global algorithmic mediation, functions as an affective intensifier: the very particularity of a cultural gesture, rhythm, or narrative pacing is what enables its pre-personal resonance to traverse linguistic boundaries. These hypotheses are tested through comparative analysis of three paradigmatic cases and evaluated against the normative horizon of an ethical design praxis.

Methodologically, the article undertakes a meta-theoretical synthesis of empirical research (2018–2025) across three case studies: TikTok’s algorithmic rhythm (social–temporal), VR narrative immersion (spatial–embodied), and the glocal curation of Indian streaming platforms (cultural–narrative). The analysis culminates

in the proposal of an Ethical Design Praxis grounded in subtraction, multiplicity, and resonance without erasure, outlining principles for interfaces that resist cultural flattening while enabling embodied global resonance. Media design thus emerges not merely as a technical craft but as an ethical and philosophical negotiation over how time itself is inhabited.

2. Literature Review

To approach digital media as an architecture of experience rather than a neutral channel of communication, this section bridges the philosophy of time with contemporary platform studies. It develops a framework that connects Bergson's ontology of perception and duration with Deleuze's theory of the image, situating these concepts within the sociotechnical conditions of algorithmic governance and global cultural circulation.

2.1. Theoretical Foundations: Bergson and Deleuze in the Digital

The philosophical foundation of this inquiry rests on the interplay between Henri Bergson's conception of time and perception, and Gilles Deleuze's subsequent adaptation of these concepts for the moving image. Central to Bergson's philosophy in *Time and Free Will* (1889) is the distinction between two forms of time: *temps* (spatialized, clock time) and *durée* (duration). While scientific time is discrete, measurable, and divisible—like beads on a string—*durée* is the qualitative, continuous flow of lived experience where the past permeates the present (Bergson, 1889, pp. 100–104). In the context of digital media, this distinction is critical. The “timeline” or “feed” of a social media platform technically operates on spatialized time (timestamps, chronologies), yet the phenomenological experience of the user often mirrors *durée*: a qualitative interpenetration of states where past content continuously informs and colors the present, producing a heterogeneous rather than homogeneous flow. New media shifts the framing of time from the object to the embodied user, a position reinforced by recent scholarship on algorithmic temporality which posits that predictive models do not merely forecast the future but actively restructure the present experience of time (Parisi, 2024, p. 80).

Bergson's second crucial contribution, articulated in *Matter and Memory* (1896), is the theory of “subtractive perception.” Contra the realist view that perception builds a picture of the world by adding details, Bergson argues that the body, as a “center of indetermination,” (1896, p. 36) perceives by *subtraction*. We are surrounded by the “aggregate of images” that is the universe, but our body filters out everything except that which is relevant to our potential action (1896, p. 18). Perception is not a passive recording but a pragmatic carving out of reality. In digital design, this concept finds literal application. Virtual Reality (VR) interfaces, for instance, function precisely through subtraction: they occlude the physical world to channel the body's sensory-motor capacities entirely toward virtual objects. Following Bergson's logic, we can say the success of an interface depends on its ability to subtract noise—whether physical distractions or interface clutter—to focus the user's capacity for meaningful action.

Gilles Deleuze (1986) extends these Bergsonian mechanics into the realm of the image, specifically through his taxonomy of the “movement-image” in *Cinema 1*. Of particular relevance is the “affect-image,” often exemplified by the close-up of a face. The affect-image occupies the gap between perception and action; it is a moment where the sensory-motor link is temporarily suspended, and the image ceases to advance the narrative, instead expressing a “pure quality” or intensity (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 65, 97). This concept provides a vocabulary for analyzing digital moments that arrest attention—the viral reaction GIF, the haptic shudder of a game controller, or the rhythmic loop of a TikTok dance. These are not narrative elements but affective intensities that circulate independently of story.

Synthesizing these frameworks allows us to view media design as a dual process: Bergson provides the mechanism (architecting time and filtering perception to create a specific mode of attention), while Deleuze provides the result (the generation of pre-personal intensities that circulate as affect). Together, they suggest that the user is not just a consumer of information, but an embodied participant in a curated flow of time and feeling. Our framework extends Deleuze's Bergsonian grounding of the movement-image (Deleuze, 1986, pp. 56–70) into the post-cinematic space of interactive platforms.

A methodological objection must be addressed before proceeding: both Bergson and Deleuze developed their accounts in relation to fundamentally different media environments—pre-digital durational experience and twentieth-century cinema, respectively. One might reasonably ask whether transposing these concepts onto interactive, algorithmic, and haptic platforms constitutes a legitimate extension or a theoretical overreach. We argue for legitimate extension on three grounds. First, the core ontological claim—that experience is constituted through qualitative temporal continuity rather than discrete metric units—is a claim about embodied perception as such, not about any particular medium; digital platforms do not abolish this structure but rather exploit it for commercial ends, which is precisely what makes the Bergsonian account diagnostically valuable. Second, Deleuze’s own extension of Bergsonian categories from philosophy to cinema demonstrates that these concepts are deliberately designed to travel across media, and the shift from cinematic spectatorship to platform interaction involves a difference of degree (in interactivity and personalization) rather than a difference of kind (in the basic structure of affect-image and temporal flow). Third, and most importantly, as the empirical synthesis in § 4 will demonstrate, the patterns documented there are described with greater precision by the Bergsonian–Deleuzian vocabulary than by available alternatives: the time-distortion literature on TikTok, the embodiment literature on VR, and the linguistic-agnosticism literature on streaming all record phenomena that existing platform-studies frameworks—organized around control, extraction, and governance—leave analytically unaddressed. The framework is thus used not as a philosophical authority to be confirmed but as a heuristic apparatus to be tested.

2.2. Platform Studies, Affective Limits, and the Gap

If Bergson and Deleuze provide the ontological vocabulary of the interface, contemporary platform studies supplies its sociotechnical conditions. A substantial body of scholarship has demonstrated how digital architectures actively structure social behavior through what Bucher (2018, p. 4) terms “programmed sociality.” Platforms, as Gillespie (2010) and van Dijck *et al.* (2018, pp. 31–48) argue, are not neutral intermediaries but curatorial systems that govern visibility and interaction through algorithms, interfaces, and terms of service. This logic is further extended by analyses of platformization, which describe an ecosystem in which user behavior is continuously nudged, captured, and rendered datafied for economic extraction (Nieborg & Poell, 2025). From this perspective, the user’s affective flow appears as a manufactured outcome, calibrated through features such as infinite scroll and variable reward to maximize time-on-device (Zuboff, 2019, chap. 16, sec. II).

However, approaches centered exclusively on algorithmic control or surveillance capitalism risk reducing the user to a passive effect of code. Couldry and Mejias (2019) frame this tendency as “data colonialism,” where human life is wholly appropriated for capitalist extraction; the risk is that the user becomes a docile subject, fully determined by code. Such frameworks struggle to explain moments where users hijack platforms for unintended affective ends—such as the use of social media for social justice movements (Sobande, 2021, p. 138)—because they overlook what Massumi (2002, pp. 25–35) describes as the autonomy of affect: the body’s capacity to register intensities that exceed linguistic capture or systemic prediction. While algorithms can model preferences, they cannot exhaust the surplus of sensibility that characterizes lived experience (Hansen, 2015, pp. 66–67). Platforms designed for entertainment may thus be repurposed for political mobilization not because the algorithm anticipates such use, but because affective intensities resonate with embodied states—anger, hope, solidarity—that remain opaque to computational logic. Affect is pre-personal and distinct from “emotion” (which is a qualified, named state), circulating between bodies and objects as economies of intensity that frequently spill over the algorithmic container.

The Bergsonian–Deleuzian framework developed here intervenes precisely at this juncture between architectural determinism and embodied agency. While platforms undeniably operate as architectures of control grounded in spatialized time, users nonetheless inhabit them through *durée*, as centers of indeterminacy capable of producing unpredictable affective responses. Design, in this sense, does not simply dictate behavior; it establishes conditions for feeling whose intensities are co-produced by interface and body. Media design thus emerges as a site of ongoing negotiation between algorithmic nudging and phenomenological excess—a tension that becomes especially consequential in the context of global platforms, where questions of cultural power and resonance intensify.

2.3. Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Affective Assemblages

This affective perspective necessitates a re-evaluation of global media flows. For much of the twentieth century, cultural imperialism framed global media through a center-periphery model in which Western industries imposed ideological homogeneity on the Global South. While political economy approaches continue to document the structural dominance of U.S.-based technology firms (Jin, 2025), the cultural dynamics of the 2020s demand more plural and provincialized perspectives (Poell *et al.*, 2025). Contemporary media circulation is increasingly characterized by contra-flows (Thussu, 2007, pp. 10–29), as regionally rooted forms—ranging from K-pop and Indian cinema to Chinese platform infrastructures such as TikTok—achieve global visibility without conforming to Western cultural templates (Lin & de Kloet, 2023; Tiwary, 2024).

Traditional theories struggle to explain how such content circulates globally while retaining cultural specificity. The affective turn offers a way forward. Affect—expressed through rhythm, gesture, spectacle, and sonic intensity—travels more frictionlessly across borders than semantic meaning or ideology. A viewer need not understand the Telugu dialogue of RRR to be swept up in the kinetic force of its “Naatu Naatu” sequence; the affect-image operates directly at the level of bodily resonance.

This dynamic is best theorized through Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the assemblage. Global platforms function not as singular imperialist instruments but as contingent global assemblages (Collier & Ong, 2007, pp. 4, 12) composed of technical infrastructures, capital flows, and circulating affects. Within these assemblages, content is simultaneously deterritorialized from its local conditions and reterritorialized within new cultural contexts. This framework displaces the binary of imperialism versus resistance, enabling global media to be understood as a circuit of affective exchange in which cultural specificity functions not as an obstacle, but as a generator of intensity.

3. Methodology

This article employs a qualitative, meta-theoretical methodology grounded in philosophical hermeneutics. Rather than generating new quantitative metrics regarding user behavior, the study synthesizes existing empirical data through a novel Bergsonian-Deleuzian framework. This approach is designed to reveal the ontological structures of media design—the underlying mechanics of time and affect—that purely quantitative approaches often obscure.

3.1. Epistemological Stance: Philosophical Hermeneutics

The epistemological foundation of this study rests on the premise that technical artifacts are not neutral instruments but actively constitute human temporal experience through their material organization. Drawing on the work of Stiegler (2019), the digital interface—understood as the orchestration of code, navigation, and sensory feedback—is treated as a primary object of hermeneutic analysis. From this perspective, the interface is not merely a surface of mediation but a site of technogenesis, where perceptual capacities and technical speeds co-evolve.

Positioned within the Indian academic context and the Global South, this study approaches predominantly Western philosophical frameworks with reflexive attention to their potential Eurocentrism. The Indian streaming case study is therefore mobilized as a methodological counterpoint, testing the extensibility of Bergsonian concepts beyond their European genealogy and ensuring sensitivity to glocal variations in affective resonance.

Methodologically, the analysis aligns with Craig’s (1999, pp. 123–124) notion of theoretical metadiscourse, applying a meta-theoretical lens to synthesize heterogeneous empirical findings. While quantitative research—such as studies of time-spend or biometric engagement—effectively captures behavioral patterns, it remains limited in accounting for how such interactions reorganize lived temporality. By reinterpreting existing empirical data through Bergson’s *durée* and Deleuze’s affect-image, this study moves beyond feature-level description toward an analysis of ontological function: how interfaces architect the user’s body as a center of indetermination.

3.2. Case Study Selection: Theoretical Sampling

To test the applicability of the Bergsonian–Deleuzian framework across divergent media conditions, this study employs theoretical sampling using a maximum-variation strategy. Three paradigmatic cases were selected for their capacity to stress the framework across distinct modalities of digital experience (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp. 230, 232).

Case selection followed three explicit criteria. First, modal contrast: each case had to represent a meaningfully distinct modality of temporal and sensory engagement, so that the Bergsonian–Deleuzian concepts could be tested against different conditions rather than confirmed under similar ones. Second, empirical tractability: each case had to be supported by a sufficient body of documented empirical evidence—whether peer-reviewed studies or, where platform-scale behavioral data is unavailable in academic literature, authoritative industry research—to ground philosophical interpretation in documented patterns rather than theoretical speculation. Third, cultural-geographical diversity: at least one case had to be situated outside the North Atlantic contexts in which Bergson and Deleuze’s frameworks were developed, so as to test the cross-cultural extensibility of the concepts and guard against Eurocentric overgeneralization. Cases were excluded if they did not meet all three criteria simultaneously; for example, platforms such as WeChat or regional community radio—while theoretically interesting—were excluded due to insufficient documented empirical evidence in accessible research databases at the time of review. The three selected cases are:

- TikTok (Temporal Modality) exemplifies the algorithmic compression of time through infinite scroll and short-form video, foregrounding rhythm and speed as generators of affective intensity.
- Virtual Reality – The Wolves in the Walls (Spatial/Haptic Modality) represents the expansion of time through embodied interaction, providing a paradigmatic case of subtractive perception and haptic dwelling that contrasts with ocular-centric social media.
- Indian Streaming Platforms (Cultural Modality) illustrate the negotiation of symbolic flows, where multilingual interfaces and glocal curation strategies facilitate affective deterritorialization and reterritorialization beyond linguistic boundaries.

3.3. Data Sources and Analytical Procedure

The analysis follows a triangulated procedure integrating interface analysis, secondary empirical research, and philosophical interpretation.

Phase 1: Analysis of Interface Affordances (Techno-Phenomenological Walkthrough)

A structural walkthrough of the selected platforms was conducted to identify temporal and affective affordances, supplemented by analysis of developer documentation and technical specifications (e.g., Oculus Integration SDK). Algorithmic audit and data-donation studies (e.g., Zannettou *et al.*, 2024) informed understanding of back-end mechanisms shaping visibility and retention, with attention to looping, scrolling, haptic feedback, and automated playback.

Phase 2: Systematic Review of Secondary Empirical Data

Secondary empirical sources published between 2018 and 2025 were reviewed using a two-track approach reflecting the different evidentiary landscapes of the three cases. For the TikTok and VR cases, sources were identified through Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Inclusion criteria for these cases were: (a) empirical studies—whether experimental, ethnographic, or observational—focused on user experience, temporal perception, embodiment, or affective engagement with the selected platforms; (b) publication between 2018 and 2025 to ensure currency; and (c) publication in English. Exclusion criteria were: purely theoretical or normative studies without empirical findings; studies focused exclusively on content analysis without attention to user experience or platform behavior. For the Indian streaming case, the evidentiary landscape differs: platform-scale audience data and content production statistics are not available in peer-reviewed academic literature and are primarily documented through authoritative industry research. Accordingly, inclusion criteria for this case were: (a) industry reports from major consulting and research

bodies with established methodological transparency (FICCI & EY 2025; Ormax Media 2025); (b) academic audience reception studies and culturally focused analyses where available (Tiwary 2024); and (c) publication between 2018 and 2025. This two-track approach is acknowledged as an evidentiary asymmetry in § 3.4 and informs the scope conditions applied to the streaming case’s conclusions. For TikTok, ethnographic and experimental research on time distortion and flow states was synthesized (Schellewald, 2023; Jiang *et al.*, 2025). For VR, foundational and recent work on embodiment, presence, and the virtual hand illusion was examined (Kilteni *et al.*, 2012; Gall *et al.*, 2021). For streaming platforms, audience reception studies and industry analyses addressing linguistic diversification and cross-language consumption were integrated (FICCI & EY, 2025; Ormax Media, 2025; Tiwary, 2024). This body of work provides the phenomenological evidence for the theoretical analysis.

Phase 3: The Bergsonian-Deleuzian Interpretive Mapping

The core analytical contribution lies in mapping empirical findings onto three conceptual operations: (i) *durée*, identifying reported experiences of time loss and flow as effects of interfaces suppressing clock-time cues; (ii) Subtractive Perception, analyzing design features that restrict sensory input to orient action; (iii) Affective Assemblage, interpreting moments of cross-cultural circulation as intensities detached from narrative meaning. For each case study, empirical findings were first organized thematically without reference to the framework (Phase 2), and the philosophical mapping was applied subsequently in a second interpretive pass. This sequencing was deliberate: it ensures that the conceptual vocabulary is tested against, rather than imposed upon, the empirical patterns. Cases where empirical findings only partially mapped onto the conceptual framework are flagged in § 3.4 as scope conditions rather than silently accommodated. This triangulation grounds philosophical claims in the material operations of code and documented user experience.

Table 1 summarises the application of this three-phase procedure across each case study, specifying the primary sources consulted, the interface mechanisms identified, and the empirical evidence grounding each conceptual operation.

Table 1. Techno-Phenomenological Mapping of Bergsonian-Deleuzian Concepts

Philosophical concept	Ontological function	Digital / interface mechanism	Empirical / phenomenological evidence
<i>Durée</i> (Bergson, 1889; 1896)	Qualitative, continuous flow of lived experience; past permeates present, producing heterogeneous temporal states.	Suppression of clock-time markers; infinite scroll; seamless automated content ingestion.	Users report “suspension of time” (Schellewald 2023); psychophysical overestimation of time spent in short sessions (Jiang <i>et al.</i> 2025).
<i>Subtractive perception</i> (Bergson, 1896)	Body as “center of indetermination”: filters the aggregate of images to orient bodily action toward relevant affordances.	Forced occlusion of physical world (HMD); haptic feedback (buffered haptics); visuomotor synchrony; 6DOF tracking.	High Sense of Embodiment (SoE) significantly intensifying emotional arousal and valence (Gall <i>et al.</i> 2021); immersion-breaking minimized by haptic confirmation (Bovet <i>et al.</i> 2018).
<i>Affect-image / assemblage</i> (Deleuze 1986; Deleuze & Guattari 1987)	Pre-personal intensities circulating independently of subjective narrative meaning; content simultaneously deterritorialized and reterritorialized.	“Pan-Indian” multilingual dubbing and subtitling interface; algorithmic gestural rhythm (FYP); audio-synced bodily movement.	Linguistic agnosticism in audiences; global viral mimicry without semantic understanding—“Naatu Naatu” trending in 60+ countries; “Savage Love” cross-cultural replication (Pilipets 2023; FICCI & EY 2025).

Source. Own elaboration.

3.4. Methodological Limitations and Scope Conditions

This study's interpretive approach entails several scope conditions that frame its findings. First, a platform selection bias arises from the focus on three dominant platforms—TikTok, Meta/Oculus, and Netflix/Amazon—which necessarily foreground design logics shaped by Silicon Valley and global capitalism. Platforms organized around different affective or infrastructural principles, such as WeChat's ecosystem or regional community radio, may instantiate alternative temporalities. Relatedly, an evidentiary asymmetry is present: while the TikTok and VR analyses draw on phenomenological and experimental research, the streaming analysis relies more heavily on industrial and structural data. This asymmetry produced a partial conceptual mapping in 4.3: the Bergsonian concept of *durée* can be attributed to Indian streaming at the level of content form—the platform preserves melodramatic pacing and temporal elongation—but the analysis cannot confirm this as lived *durée* in the phenomenological sense Bergson intended, since no primary user data is available to corroborate the subjective temporal experience of streaming audiences. This limitation is noted at the opening of 4.3 and at 4.3.5, and informs the scope of the conclusions drawn from that case.

Second, the study is subject to a linguistic limitation. Although it engages with Indian streaming cultures, the secondary scholarship synthesized is predominantly Anglophone, constraining access to indigenous theories of technology and temporality that might offer ontological alternatives to Bergson and Deleuze. Finally, the absence of primary user data limits claims requiring direct ethnographic insight into subjective experience; the meta-synthetic approach remains oriented toward documented patterns rather than first-person phenomenology.

4. Analysis: Three Affective Assemblages

Digital platforms do not simply mediate content; they assemble heterogeneous elements—bodies, code, temporal structures, and cultural histories—into what Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 88) describe as machinic assemblages. This section examines three media environments—TikTok, immersive VR narratives, and Indian streaming platforms—not as neutral infrastructures, but as affective assemblages that actively engineer relations between time (*durée*) and the body (sensorium).

Each case study constitutes a distinct modulation of Bergson's "center of indetermination" (Bergson, 1896, p. 36). TikTok produces a synthetic duration through algorithmic speed and rhythmic synchronization; VR generates immersion through haptic subtraction; and streaming platforms deterritorialize narrative form to yield globalized intensities. Tracing affect across these architectures reveals how digital design negotiates the tension between algorithmic quantification and lived temporality. The analysis proceeds from TikTok's accelerated rhythms to the haptic depth of VR and, finally, to the cultural negotiations of streaming media.

4.1. TikTok: Algorithmic *Durée* and Rhythmic Multiplicities

This case tests the first hypothesis by applying Bergson's concept of *durée* and Deleuze's account of the affect-image to TikTok's design architecture. The analytical question is whether TikTok's interface operates by manufacturing a qualitative temporal experience that resembles *durée*—in which spatialized time markers are suppressed and affect circulates as pre-personal intensity—or whether the platform merely produces a quantitatively longer dwell-time that existing engagement metrics already capture adequately.

The interface of TikTok, characterized by its full-screen vertical video and the infinite scroll of the "For You Page" (FYP), constitutes a radical intervention in the experience of digital time. Unlike the searchable databases of Web 1.0 or the social graphs of Facebook, TikTok functions as an affective engine (drawing on Schellewald, 2023) that prioritizes the immediacy of sensory-motor engagement over cognitive selection. Through a Bergsonian-Deleuzian lens, the platform can be understood as generating a synthetic *durée*—a manufactured continuity of time—populated by pre-personal intensities that allow cultural gestures to traverse linguistic borders.

4.1.1. The Architecture of Synthetic *Durée*

The primary artifact of TikTok's design (as evidenced by its developer protocols for "content ingestion") is the seamless, automated flow of content. The minimization of cognitive load—removing the need to select, click, or search—creates a "perceived effortlessness" that facilitates the user's entry into a state of sustained engagement. While distinct from Bergson's metaphysical concept of *durée*, this psychological flow functions here as its phenomenological entry point. From a Bergsonian perspective, this design operationalizes subtractive perception. Bergson (1896, pp. 22, 36) argues that perception is naturally subtractive; the body filters out the "aggregate of images" to focus only on what is relevant for action. TikTok's interface externalizes this function. By removing clocks, battery indicators, and navigational borders, the interface subtracts the markers of *spatialized time* (discrete minutes and hours), leaving the user in a state of pure, qualitative passage.

Schellewald's (2023) ethnographic work confirms this phenomenological shift, reporting that users explicitly experience TikTok as a "suspension of time" or a "feel-good space" where the pressures of linear time dissolve. The user becomes locked in a feedback loop not with other humans, but with a digital reflection of their own past affects—what might be termed an "algorithmized self." Following Stiegler's (2019, p. 38) analysis of computational capitalism, the recommendation algorithm operates as a prosthetic memory system, curating a temporal stream where the user's past affects (indicated by dwell time and haptic interactions) continuously bleed into their present consumption.

Experimental data by Jiang *et al.* (2025) provides the psychophysical evidence for this synthetic *durée*. Their study reveals a significant "duration effect" where users tend to overestimate time spent during shorter sessions (around 5 minutes) due to high cognitive immersion and emotional engagement. This distortion suggests that the "stickiness" of TikTok relies on modulating the user's internal clock through rapid, intense stimuli. Zannettou *et al.* (2024) complement this by finding that while user attention per individual video remains stable (around 45% completion), the total time spent on the platform rises significantly with tenure. Together, these findings indicate that TikTok engineers *durée* at the stream level: a manufactured duration in which the user is induced, in Bergson's words, to "let itself live" (1889, p. 100) — not freely, but within an algorithmically curated flow.

4.1.2. Pre-Personal Intensities and the Global Body

Within this temporal flow, TikTok facilitates cross-cultural resonance through what Pilipets (2023) terms "gestural assemblages." Unlike text-based platforms that require semantic translation, TikTok relies on the affect-image (1986)—close-ups of facial expressions, rhythmic bodily movements, and synced audio—to transmit meaning. These elements function as pre-personal intensities: affects that exist below the level of subjective emotion or narrative meaning, capable of circulating rapidly between bodies.

The global viral phenomenon of the "Savage Love" dance challenge serves as a paradigmatic example. Originating from a specific cultural context, the trend spread not because global users understood the lyrical semantics, but because they could inhabit the *rhythm*. TikTok allows users to resemiotize audio tracks, using the body to insert local meaning into global templates—a process of bodily translation that bypasses linguistic barriers. However, through a Deleuzian lens, this is less about representation and more about becoming. When a user in Korea, the US, or Brazil performs the same synchronized hip-sway to the same 15-second audio clip, they are not merely imitating; they are plugging into a "machinic assemblage" that temporarily synchronizes their sensory-motor schemas.

Pilipets (2023) argues that features like "Duet" blur the distinction between the self and the network, creating "zones of indistinction" where individual authorship dissolves into collective mimicry. This resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987, p.153) concept of the Body without Organs (BwO)—a surface where intensities flow freely, unconstrained by the organism's organization. TikTok creates a conditioned digital BwO. It acts as a paradoxical surface where a gesture (a shrug, a wink, a dance move) becomes a line of flight, deterritorializing from its original cultural context (e.g., a specific creator's bedroom) and reterritorializing across millions of bodies worldwide, even as it is simultaneously captured by the algorithmic logic of the feed.

4.1.3. The Ethics of Automediality

While this rhythmic synchronization creates powerful affective bonds through collective mimicry and gestural replication, it raises ethical questions regarding the commodification of the body. Weiß *et al.* (2025) highlight how trends like the #mixedgirlcheck incentivize an “embodied performance” that caters to algorithmic visibility, often reinforcing normative beauty standards under the guise of “automediality.” The algorithm rewards the *recognizable* gesture, the *repeatable* intensity. Consequently, cultural specificity is often flattened into an aesthetic that serves the platform’s engagement metrics.

Thus, TikTok’s affective assemblage reveals a paradox: it utilizes Bergsonian *durée* to immerse users in a flow that feels subjective and intimate, yet it populates that duration with Deleuzian *intensities* that are standardized and replicable. It builds a “global body” united by rhythm, but one that is constantly disciplined by the logic of the algorithm to move, feel, and react in sync. As Weiß *et al.* (2025) argue, the platform’s reliance on pop-culture remixing encourages a form of “cultural mass-self-reproduction” that reinforces normative representations. However, they also observe that creators display a degree of reflexivity; by engaging with primary hashtags while challenging their normative expectations, some creators participate in a “counter-trend” that problematizes the essentializing gaze. This indicates a complex interplay between platform-driven homogeneity and user agency, illustrating how vernacular cultures on TikTok can both reinforce and resist dominant discourses. This disciplinary sync anticipates the need for design principles that reclaim user agency from algorithmic standardization.

4.2. VR Narratives (*The Wolves in the Walls*): Haptic Subtraction and the Time-Image

This case tests Bergson’s concept of subtractive perception in its most literal technological instantiation, and examines whether Deleuze’s account of the time-image—the suspension of the sensory-motor schema in favor of pure temporal dwelling—describes the distinctive affective logic of haptic VR interaction. If the TikTok analysis found that platforms can manufacture *durée* through acceleration, the VR case tests the hypothesis that equivalent depth of affective engagement can be produced through its structural opposite: deceleration, interruption, and haptic intimacy.

While TikTok compresses time into a rhythmic, algorithmic flow, immersive Virtual Reality (VR) narratives operate through a radical inversion of this logic: the expansion of the present moment through spatial inhabitation. This case study analyzes *The Wolves in the Walls* (2018), an interactive VR adaptation of Neil Gaiman’s graphic novel, to demonstrate how haptic embodiment generates affective flows. Unlike the acceleration of social media, VR narratives rely on “haptic subtraction”—a Bergsonian filtering of physical reality—to establish a Deleuzian “affective circuit” between the user and the virtual protagonist.

4.2.1. The Artifact: Embodied Agency and the Virtual Hand

In *The Wolves in the Walls*, the user is not a passive spectator but is cast as the protagonist Lucy’s “imaginary friend.” This role is functional; the user possesses a virtual body, represented by stylized hands that mirror their physical movements via standard 6DOF tracking (as defined in Oculus VR, LLC, 2017). The experience requires embodied actions: picking up a Polaroid camera, shining a flashlight, or passing objects to Lucy.

Carpio *et al.* (2023) classify this interactivity as “Embodied Virtual Reality (EVR),” distinguishing it from passive 360-degree video. They argue that the presence of “virtual rubber hands”—a reference to the psychological Rubber Hand Illusion (RHI)—triggers a sense of body ownership where the user feels physically present in the diegetic world. This ownership is reinforced by haptic feedback—a feature implemented through “buffered haptics” (Oculus VR, LLC, 2017)—where the controllers vibrate to provide tactile confirmation of a virtual event. Carpio *et al.* (2023) note that in *Wolves*, embodiment is deepened through “character awareness,” where Lucy makes direct eye contact and reacts to the user’s physical proximity, bridging the gap between the algorithmic system and the user’s biological “center of indetermination.”

4.2.2. Empirical Foundations: The Necessity of Multimodal Feedback

The efficacy of this design is supported by extensive literature on the Sense of Embodiment (SoE). Kilteni *et al.*'s (2012) foundational definition of SoE—comprising *self-location*, *agency*, and *body ownership*—remains central to recent scholarship (e.g., Guy *et al.*, 2023). In *Wolves*, agency is paramount; the user's physical hand movement matches the visual feedback perfectly. This visuomotor synchrony is the primary driver of the illusion that the virtual body is one's own.

However, visual synchrony alone is insufficient for deep emotional engagement. Gall *et al.* (2021) demonstrate that high levels of virtual embodiment significantly intensify emotional responses; participants who felt a stronger sense of ownership over a virtual body reported higher arousal and more intense valence when exposed to emotional content. This suggests that the user's empathy for Lucy's fear is correlated to the extent to which they feel physically embodied in the room with her. Furthermore, the role of haptic feedback is critical in deepening embodiment. In *Wolves*, when the user hands an object to Lucy, the haptic buzz transforms a graphical collision into a felt encounter, minimizing the "floating hand" discrepancy that Bovet *et al.* (2018) identify as a primary breaker of immersion while reinforcing the emotional intensity documented by Gall *et al.* (2021).

4.2.3. Philosophical Reinterpretation: Bergson's Subtractive Perception

Conventional analyses often frame VR as an "additive" medium. However, applying Bergson's theory from *Matter and Memory* (1896) reveals a different mechanism. Bergson argues that perception is naturally subtractive; the body functions as a "center of indetermination" that filters the vast "aggregate of images" (the universe), perceiving only that which is relevant to its potential action.

VR headsets function as a technological simulation of this process. By physically blocking out the external world, the head-mounted display (HMD) performs a forced subtraction of the physical environment. While biological perception subtracts naturally to allow action, the VR interface artificially imposes this subtraction to re-center the body's indeterminacy solely on the virtual objects. The user reaches for the virtual flashlight not because they have suspended disbelief, but because the physical affordances of the real world have been subtracted, leaving the virtual object as the *only* available site for action. As Filter *et al.* (2020) note, immersive VR allows users to feel present in a mediated environment by isolating them from the external world—a technological enforcement of Bergsonian focus.

4.2.4. Deleuze's Affective Circuit and the Time-Image

Where Bergson explains the entry into the virtual, Deleuze helps us understand the interaction. In *Cinema 1* (1986, p. 66), Deleuze describes the affective circuit where perception and action are linked by affection (intensity). Video games typically operate on a tight sensory-motor loop (see enemy/shoot enemy). *The Wolves in the Walls*, however, frequently suspends this action. There are moments where Lucy simply looks at the user, waiting, or where the user must crouch and hide.

In these moments of hesitation, the experience shifts toward temporal dwelling. The interaction is no longer about linear progression but about inhabiting the shared space. When the user hands a virtual object to Lucy, it generates a "crystal of time" where the actual (physical hand) and the virtual (digital hand) become indiscernible. The haptic feedback serves as the "flesh" of this circuit, proving that affect is generated not by speed, but by the intimacy of the exchange. In contrast to TikTok's compression of duration into micro-intensities, VR generates deep affective resonance through interruption—the pause in the sensory-motor schema where the body must wait, listen, and feel—a logic that will be reconfigured, at the scale of cultural circulation, in the following case.

4.2.5. Cultural Dimensions: The Universality of Fairytale Affect

While *The Wolves in the Walls* demonstrates haptic embodiment's capacity to generate presence, the narrative's cultural positioning merits critical examination. Adapted from Neil Gaiman's work, the narrative relies on Western fairytale tropes—the child's fear of the dark, the "monsters in the walls." These are archetypal

fears, yet they are framed through a specific Anglo-American domestic aesthetic. This raises a critical question: Does VR's haptic intensity rely on culturally "neutral" (or hegemonically Western) narratives to function globally? While the *mechanism* of haptic subtraction (Bergson) is physiological and arguably universal, the *content* of the affect (Deleuze) remains culturally coded. Future applications of this framework must investigate whether non-Western spatial aesthetics—such as the circular time of Indigenous storytelling or the distinct spatiality of Indian *Rasa* aesthetics—generate different forms of haptic dwelling.

4.3. Indian Streaming: Deterritorializing the Narrative

This case tests the second hypothesis directly: that cultural specificity functions as an affective intensifier rather than a barrier to global circulation. The analytical question shifts from the engineering of individual user temporality (as in TikTok and VR) to the circulation of affective intensities across cultural and linguistic boundaries at scale. The Deleuzian concept of deterritorialization–reterritorialization is the primary analytical lens, supplemented by Bergson's account of *durée* to explain how culturally distinctive narrative temporalities survive—rather than being flattened by—the global streaming interface. It should be noted that the attribution of *durée* to this case operates at the level of documented content form and industrial structure rather than primary user phenomenology; the scope of this claim is addressed in §3.4.

If Virtual Reality relies on the "haptic subtraction" of the physical world to create presence, Indian streaming platforms (Over-the-Top or OTT) operate through a mechanism of cultural deterritorialization. By analyzing the interface architectures of platforms like Netflix India, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+ Hotstar, alongside the global trajectory of content like *Sacred Games* and *RRR*, this section argues that these platforms function as "machinic assemblages" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 88) that strip content of its territorial limitations (language and geography) while amplifying its affective intensity.

4.3.1. The Artifact: The Interface as a Translation Machine

The primary artifact here is not just the video file, but the playback interface itself. Features such as the "Audio & Subtitles" menu, the "Skip Intro" button, and the algorithmic "More Like This" rail constitute a technological apparatus designed to liquify cultural boundaries. On Amazon Prime Video, the "X-Ray" feature allows a viewer to instantly decode the cast and music of a regional Indian film, rendering local knowledge globally accessible.

The FICCI & EY Report (2025) highlights a pivotal shift in this architecture: 25% to 50% of video consumption on OTT platforms in India is now in "subs and dubs" (dubbed and subtitled formats). Furthermore, 48% of total content produced in 2024 was in regional languages, effectively creating a "national market" for what was previously siloed regional cinema. This structural shift means that a Malayalam thriller or a Telugu action epic is no longer bound to its linguistic territory; the interface transforms it into a fluid, accessible commodity.

4.3.2. Empirical Foundations: The "Pan-Indian" Flow

Secondary evidence confirms that Indian streaming is not merely about distributing Bollywood content but about a "multi-directional flow." The scale of this assemblage is immense: according to the Ormax OTT Audience Report (2025), India's digital video universe has expanded to 601.2 million users, representing 41% of the country's population. This vast, heterogeneous audience is increasingly consuming content outside their native linguistic silos.

As Tiwary (2024) observes, streaming platforms have accelerated the "Pan-Indian" phenomenon by offering wider distribution and high-quality dubbing, effectively mainstreaming regional cinema. This linguistic fluidity is corroborated by consumption patterns in adjacent media. Data from IPRS (via FICCI & EY, 2025) indicates that 30% of total music streams in India are now in languages other than Hindi, driven largely by the cross-pollination of film cultures on digital platforms. The audience has become "language agnostic," consuming narratives based on genre intensity (crime, action, melodrama) rather than linguistic identity. The massive success of S.S. Rajamouli's *RRR* on Netflix globally demonstrates this phenomenon: viewership is no

longer dictated by linguistic familiarity but by the capacity of the content to generate visceral affect that traverses borders.

4.3.3. Philosophical Reinterpretation: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization

Through a Deleuzian lens, the streaming platform functions as a Machine of Deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 508) describe deterritorialization as the movement by which something escapes or departs from a given territory. When a hyper-local narrative like *Kantara* (rooted in the folklore of coastal Karnataka) is uploaded to Prime Video with multi-language audio tracks, it is deterritorialized. It is stripped of its specific “broadcast context” (a local theater in Tulu Nadu) and released into a global “plane of consistency” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 69–70)

However, this is not a process of erasure. It is immediately followed by Reterritorialization. The content is re-embedded into new contexts—a Spanish viewer’s living room or a Hindi speaker’s mobile phone. What allows this reterritorialization to be successful? It is the Affect-Image (Deleuze, 1986). The spectacle of the tiger dance in *RRR* or the visceral violence in *Mirzapur* operates as a pre-personal intensity that does not require semantic translation. The *feeling* of the action bypasses the *meaning* of the dialogue.

4.3.4. Close Reading: The Affective Choreography of “Naatu Naatu”

To illustrate how affective intensities facilitate deterritorialization, consider the “Naatu Naatu” sequence from S.S. Rajamouli’s *RRR* (2022). In this dance battle set at a British colonial party, the protagonists Bheem and Ram challenge their oppressors not through dialogue, but through synchronized movement. The scene is a masterclass in what Deleuze calls the movement-image. The choreography relies on a high-tempo, percussive stomp—a “hook step” that is mechanically repetitive yet kinetically explosive. From a Bergsonian perspective, the sequence creates a distinct *durée* through rhythmic acceleration. The camera creates a kinesthetic circuit with the dancers, matching their speed with rapid cuts and kinetic framing. As the tempo increases, the narrative context (anti-colonial resistance) blurs into a pure pre-personal intensity of joy and stamina.

Crucially, when this scene travelled globally via Netflix, trending in 60+ countries, it did so without the need for subtitles. The “hook step” became a memetic assemblage, replicated on TikTok by millions of users who knew nothing of the Telugu freedom fighters the film depicts. This demonstrates that cultural specificity (the “Naatu” style) was preserved not through semantic explanation, but through the transmission of kinetic energy. The affect of the dance bypassed the intellect of the audience.

4.3.5. Bergson’s *Durée* and the Resistance of Melodrama

While the platform deterritorializes language, it paradoxically preserves the temporal texture or Bergsonian *durée* of the content. Indian storytelling has traditionally been characterized by a distinct temporality—intermissions, song-and-dance sequences, and a melodramatic pacing that defies the tight, three-act structure of Western cinema. In this context, the melodramatic form functions as an affective scaffold, prioritizing the modulation of intensity over linear plot progression.

The FICCI & EY Report (2025) indicates that drama and crime remain the most popular genres (60% of releases), and long-duration fiction content continues to drive high stickiness. The OTT platform’s “synthetic duration” (the binge) accommodates the expansive nature of Indian narrative, allowing the specific *durée* of Indian storytelling to survive rather than being edited down to Hollywood standards. It should be noted that this attribution of *durée* operates at the structural level of content form and platform architecture—not as a claim about the lived phenomenological experience of any individual viewer, which would require primary audience data unavailable in this study.

4.3.6. Critique: The Capitalist Assemblage

It is crucial, however, to recognize this as a “Capitalist Assemblage.” Platforms like Netflix and Amazon do not deterritorialize content for the sake of cultural exchange, but to extract affective surplus value. By breaking the “Hollywood Standard” of storytelling and investing in local “authenticity,” they are effectively mining local

culture for global profit. The FICCI & EY Report (2025) reveals that while content volume fell by 12% in 2024 due to profitability pressures, the focus shifted to “higher quality” and “franchise” content. This suggests a commodification of culture where only those local narratives that can generate high-intensity affect (violence, spectacle, crime) are greenlit, potentially marginalizing quieter, slower, or more experimental forms of regional cinema.

4.3.7. Key Finding: Affective Capitalism

The interface acts as a translation machine that renders language secondary, allowing affect to resonate globally. This challenges the traditional notion of “cultural imperialism” and suggests a structural shift toward “affective capitalism,” where power operates not through ideological domination but through extraction—mining local intensities, packaging them, and selling them back to a global audience. The “Indianness” of the content—its melodramatic pitch, its color palette, its emotional pacing—becomes the primary commodity, preserved not because global platforms respect cultural specificity but because that specificity generates the affective surplus value they require.

4.4. Cross-Case Synthesis: Patterns in Affective Architecture

By juxtaposing TikTok, VR narratives, and Indian streaming, three distinct patterns of affective architecture emerge.

4.4.1. Convergence: The Primacy of Rhythm

Across all three assemblages, rhythm emerges as the primary carrier of affect. Whether it is the staccato scroll of TikTok, the rhythmic “hook step” of *RRR*, or the pacing of interaction in *Wolves*, rhythm functions as a shared pre-linguistic register of affective transmission. It allows users to synchronize with the machine (and each other) at a pre-cognitive level, validating Deleuze’s assertion that the body is defined by its capacity to affect and be affected (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 257).

4.4.2. Divergence: Speed vs. Depth

However, the cases reveal fundamentally different temporal strategies. TikTok operates through compression: it atomizes *durée* into micro-intensities to maximize affective novelty and sustain engagement. Conversely, VR operates through expansion: it uses haptics to slow down perception, forcing the user to “dwell” in the image. Streaming platforms occupy a middle ground, utilizing layering: allowing the distinct, melodramatic *durée* of regional content to survive within the global interface. The comparative analysis of these three affective assemblages, organized by their temporal, strategic, and philosophical dimensions, is synthesized in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparative Framework of Affective Assemblages

Dimension	TikTok	VR (<i>Wolves</i>)	Streaming
<i>Temporality</i>	Compressed (Speed)	Expanded (Dwelling)	Layered (Melodramatic)
<i>Primary Affect</i>	Rhythmic Sync	Haptic Intimacy	Narrative Arc / Spectacle
<i>Cultural Strategy</i>	Deterritorialization	Universal Archetype	Reterritorialization
<i>Bergson Concept</i>	Synthetic <i>Durée</i>	Subtractive Perception	Preserved <i>Durée</i>
<i>Deleuze Concept</i>	Affect-Image	Time-Image	Global Assemblage

Source. Own elaboration.

4.4.3. Cultural Specificity as Affective Intensifier

Finally, the comparison reveals a counter-intuitive finding: Cultural specificity is an intensifier, not a barrier. The “Savage Love” dance and “Naatu Naatu” succeeded globally *because* they were specific, not generic. Their distinct kinetic signatures cut through the noise of the digital sphere. This suggests that the “flattening” feared by critics of cultural imperialism is not inevitable; rather, the “Global Assemblage” rewards intense localities that can be affectively felt, even if they cannot be linguistically understood.

5. Discussion: An Ethical Design Praxis

The preceding analysis of TikTok, VR narratives, and Indian streaming platforms demonstrates that media design is not merely a technical arrangement of pixels and code, but an ontological architecture that structures time, embodiment, and cultural exchange. Recalling the research question—how do distinct digital media architectures engineer specific affective temporalities, and what are the ethical implications of this engineering—, this section outlines a praxis for how design can negotiate the tension between cultural diversity and algorithmic homogenization.

If, as has been argued, these interfaces function as “affective assemblages” that can manufacture synthetic *durée* (TikTok) or capitalize on deterritorialized intensities (streaming), then the role of the designer shifts from a creator of content to an architect of being. While acknowledging the structural constraints of the capitalist assemblage, we argue that design can function as a site of resistance. Moving beyond the prevailing industry ethics of “user engagement” (which prioritizes retention) or “content moderation” (which prioritizes safety), this article proposes a structural ethics grounded in the Bergsonian-Deleuzian framework.

Table 3 maps the three case studies to their corresponding ethical principles and proposed design applications, providing an overview of the normative framework elaborated in 5.1–5.3.

Table 3. Mapping Affective Architectures to Ethical Design Praxis

Platform / case study	Architectural critique (the problem)	Ethical principle (the response)	Proposed design application
TikTok	Accumulative overload collapses the “interval” of hesitation; rigid molar categorizations trap users in filter bubbles.	Principle 1: <i>Design by Subtraction</i> Principle 2: <i>Designing for Multiplicity*</i>	Aesthetic / haptic “stopping cues” to interrupt infinite scroll; “Serendipity Slider” enabling divergent content exploration.
VR narratives (<i>The Wolves in the Walls</i>)	Serves as a positive model rather than a problematic architecture: haptic dwelling demonstrates the restorative potential of subtraction.	Principle 1: <i>Design by Subtraction</i>	Haptic friction and environmental occlusion as design strategy: subtracting interface “noise” restores the interval of hesitation and lived temporal experience.
Indian OTT streaming	“Capitalist assemblage”: extracts affective surplus value from local cultures; flattens cultural context for global commodification.	Principle 3: <i>Resonance without Erasure</i> (Rhizomatic Ethics)	“Amplification + Provenance”: metadata carrying the cultural origin story; economic equity for local creators; cosmopolitanism of the affective.

*Note: While Principle 2 is mapped here to TikTok’s algorithmic feed, the ethical mandate to design for multiplicity applies to platform recommendation logic generally, including OTT streaming.

Source. Own elaboration.

5.1. Principle 1: Design by Subtraction (The Bergsonian Ethics)

The dominant economic model of the digital age is the “Attention Economy,” predicated on a logic of accumulation: more notifications, infinite scrolls, and omnipresent connectivity. Stiegler (2019, pp. 38, 262) argues that this “ideological bombardment” short-circuits the user’s cognitive faculties, reducing the human subject to a reactive automaton. In Bergsonian terms, this accumulative overload collapses the “interval” (Bergson, 1896, p. 57) between perception and action. When the interval disappears—as seen in the hypnotic, sensory-motor loop of TikTok—the body ceases to be a “center of indetermination” capable of choice.

The Principle: An ethical praxis must reclaim Bergson’s logic of subtraction. Bergson (1896) posits that perception is functional only when it subtracts the superfluous to focus on potential action. Therefore, ethical interfaces should not compete to occupy every moment of the user’s attention but should strategically subtract stimuli to restore the interval of hesitation.

Application: This manifests in “Subtractive Interfaces” that return the ownership of *durée* to the user. Instead of “infinite scroll” (which manufactures false continuity), interfaces should employ “stopping cues”—aesthetic or haptic frictions that interrupt the flow. As seen in *The Wolves in the Walls*, subtracting the “noise” of the interface allows the signal of lived experience to emerge.

5.2. Principle 2: Designing for Multiplicity (The Deleuzian Ethics)

If the additive model threatens the user’s time, the algorithmic model threatens the user’s identity. Current recommendation engines rely on “Molar” categorizations—rigid, statistical groupings that trap the subject in fixed identities or “filter bubbles.” Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 275, 292) warn that such “molar lines” stifle the potential for “becoming,” a concern echoed in recent AI scholarship which argues that hyper-personalization can “undermine independent decision-making” (Machidon, 2025, p. 8).

The Principle: Ethical design must engineer for the “Body without Organs” (BwO)—a fluid surface where intensities circulate freely. Algorithms should treat the user not as a fixed data point to be predicted, but as a “multiplicity” capable of varying states of affect.

Application: This requires a shift from predictive accuracy to “Algorithmic Serendipity.” As Machidon (2025) argues, ethical recommender systems must integrate “mechanisms such as serendipity, diversity, and randomization” to counteract the narrowing effects of personalization. Practically, this could involve a “Serendipity Slider” that allows users to adjust the ratio of “familiar” vs. “divergent” content, enabling them to use the platform to explore new identities rather than being confined to a statistical past.

5.3. Principle 3: Resonance without Erasure (The Rhizomatic Ethics)

The analysis of Indian streaming highlighted the tension of “Capitalist Assemblages”—the risk that global platforms “flatten” local cultures into palatable commodities. The danger is that the “affective flow” becomes a mechanism of appropriation, where the *aesthetic* of a culture is extracted while the *context* is erased.

The Principle: Ethical global media must function as a “rhizome”—a network of connections with no center, where distinct roots can interconnect without losing their specificity. This aligns with Costanza-Chock’s (2020, p. 23) framework of “Design Justice,” which calls for systems that explicitly challenge the “matrix of domination” by centering the knowledge and practices of marginalized communities rather than erasing them.

Application: This involves “Amplification” combined with “Provenance.” Platforms must ensure that as content travels (deterritorializes), its history travels with it. Metadata should amplify the “origin story” of the affect, transforming viral moments into educational opportunities. Furthermore, true resonance requires economic

equity; the “affective surplus value” generated by local content must flow back to local creators, ensuring a “cosmopolitanism of the affective” where users resonate with the *feeling* of another culture while respecting its distinct *durée*.

5.4. Synthesis

The role of the designer, as these three principles collectively argue, is to build “machines of liberation” rather than “machines of capture.” By respecting the user’s *durée*, enabling their *becoming*, and honoring their *cultural specificity*, media design can move beyond the logic of imperialism and addiction. This fosters what Escobar (2018) terms a “pluriverse”—a digital ecology where many worlds fit—allowing us, in Bergson’s words, to let the ego “let itself live” (Bergson, 1889, p. 100).

5.5. Critical Reflections: Tensions, Limits, and Alternative Readings

Before closing, it is necessary to evaluate the framework itself against three substantive challenges, and to situate the findings in relation to alternative theoretical positions.

~ *On the adequacy of Bergson and Deleuze for digital contexts.* A legitimate objection can be raised against any study that deploys Bergson and Deleuze in a new domain: that the framework is simply adopted as interpretive authority rather than critically evaluated for its analytical purchase. The preceding analysis has attempted to foreclose this objection by treating the concepts as heuristic tools to be tested rather than confirmed. The analysis demonstrates that Bergsonian and Deleuzian concepts generate genuine analytical traction—they identify mechanisms (subtractive perception, synthetic *durée*, the affect-image) that account for empirically documented phenomena that existing frameworks leave unexplained. Nevertheless, three tensions must be acknowledged. First, Bergson’s account of *durée* was developed against the backdrop of Newtonian spatialized time, not algorithmic time; the “synthetic *durée*” that TikTok produces is a manufactured simulacrum of lived temporal continuity, not its genuine instantiation. This means the framework identifies a structural homology, not an identity—the platform exploits the same perceptual architecture that Bergson described, but for ends that are fundamentally heteronomous rather than liberatory. Second, Deleuze’s affect-image was theorized for cinema, a relatively passive spectatorship; its extension to interactive and haptic environments modifies the concept in ways that a more conservative reading of Deleuze would contest. We treat this as productive extension rather than distortion, but acknowledge that this move requires theoretical justification rather than mere assertion. Third, neither Bergson nor Deleuze developed their accounts with global South media cultures in view; the Indian streaming case functions as a partial but important corrective, revealing that the affective dimensions of melodramatic pacing and collective spectatorship do not map cleanly onto a framework calibrated for Western individuated experience.

~ *On alternative frameworks.* Two alternatives are worth engaging critically. The surveillance capitalism framework (Zuboff 2019) shares this article’s concern with the extraction of user experience for commercial ends but frames this primarily as an epistemological and political-economic problem—a matter of behavioral futures markets—rather than an ontological problem of how time and embodiment are structured. This makes it powerful for regulatory and structural analysis but less capable of addressing the micro-phenomenological dimension: why users consent to, and often actively enjoy, architectures that extract from them. The platform imperialism framework (Jin 2025) similarly accounts for structural power asymmetries in global media circulation but struggles to explain contra-flows and the global success of non-Western content without recourse to the affective dimension this article foregrounds. The Bergsonian-Deleuzian approach is not a replacement for either of these frameworks but a complementary lens that operates at a different analytical level—the level of embodied temporal experience—and that becomes most valuable when political-economic analysis identifies a mechanism (e.g., “engagement”) without explaining its phenomenological conditions.

~ *On the speculative character of the design praxis.* The ethical principles outlined in 5.1–5.3 are deliberately speculative rather than operationalized. They cannot, in the current study, be tested against actual design interventions or user outcomes. This is a real limitation: translating a philosophical praxis into design specifications would require empirical design research—user testing, iterative prototyping, and longitudinal evaluation—that lies beyond the scope and method of this article. These principles are therefore best understood as orienting frameworks for future research rather than implementable recommendations. Identifying this as a limitation also points toward the most productive direction for subsequent work in this area.

6. Conclusion

This article has posited that digital media design functions as a dynamic architecture of being, extending beyond the technical organization of information to the ontological structuring of time and embodiment. Through the synthesis of Bergson's notion of *durée* and Deleuze's conception of the affect-image, the analysis has attempted to illuminate how interfaces—from the algorithmic rhythms of TikTok to the haptic immersion of *The Wolves in the Walls* and the deterritorialized flows of Indian streaming—curate sensory-motor experiences that resonate across cultural borders. In direct response to the research question, the analysis demonstrates that different platform architectures engineer affective temporality through three distinct mechanisms: TikTok manufactures a synthetic *durée* through algorithmic compression and the subtraction of clock-time markers; VR generates affective depth through haptic subtraction and the Deleuzian suspension of the sensory-motor schema; and Indian streaming platforms enable global resonance by deterritorializing content while paradoxically preserving its culturally specific temporal texture. Both hypotheses are substantially supported: the Bergsonian-Deleuzian framework proves analytically productive across all three cases, and cultural specificity consistently emerges as an affective intensifier rather than a barrier to circulation. By examining these diverse modalities, we argue for a fundamental shift in media analysis: moving from a "politics of representation," which asks what images mean or how cultures are depicted, to a "politics of affect," which investigates what images *do*—how they mobilize the body, modulate attention, and synchronize duration to bypass linguistic barriers. The case studies demonstrate that while global platforms often operate through a capitalist logic of extraction, they simultaneously rely on the preservation of specific temporalities—the "interval" of hesitation in VR or the melodramatic pacing of regional cinema—to generate value.

However, this theoretical exploration is framed by specific methodological and epistemological boundaries. As a meta-theoretical analysis synthesizing secondary empirical data, this study lacks the granular fidelity of primary ethnographic fieldwork. While we have mapped the *structural* capacity of interfaces to engineer affect, we cannot fully account for the idiosyncratic, resistant, or subversive ways individual users might inhabit these structures in their daily lives. Furthermore, the application of a Eurocentric philosophical framework (Bergson and Deleuze) to phenomena in the Global South—specifically Indian streaming cultures—requires a reflexive caution. We have attempted to use these concepts not as colonial impositions but as heuristic tools to reveal universal mechanics of technogenesis. Yet, we acknowledge that a fully decolonial media theory would require integrating these "lines of flight" with indigenous epistemologies of time and aesthetic traditions (such as *Rasa* theory) to fully grasp the nuances of non-Western affective flows.

Looking toward the horizon, the stakes of this "design of duration" are intensifying. As digital media evolves through the increasing integration of Generative AI and the spatial computing of the "Metaverse," the Bergsonian question of *durée* becomes critical. If TikTok's algorithm curates a "synthetic duration" from past choices, AI-driven narratives promise to hallucinate entirely new temporalities, generating content in real-time that perfectly matches the user's affective state. These risks collapsing the "interval" of hesitation entirely, creating a seamless feedback loop where the distinction between human desire and machine prediction dissolves. In this context, the ethical praxis outlined here—design by subtraction, multiplicity, and resonance—is urgent. It suggests that the responsibility of the media designer has shifted. They are no longer merely engineers of engagement tasked with maximizing retention; they are architects of human duration, charged with the ethical imperative to build digital environments that allow us to inhabit time rather than simply consume it.

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