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Research article

Artificial intelligence culture and reproduction of popular culture through artificial intelligence: A research on the visual content production generated with artificial intelligence

E. Sahra Öztürk | Independent researcher, ph.d. | Yeditepe University, İstanbul, Turkey (graduate) | elm.sahra@gmail.com | https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5202-7270

Abstract

In the literature, although the concept of artificial intelligence (AI) is frequently researched in the fields of engineering, and also examined by social scientists, it has been seen a lack of definition regarding AI's role in the production of cultural creative content. In this direction, the study has aimed to present an approach suggesting that content generated with AI creates its own unique culture; the term "artificial intelligence (AI) culture" has been chosen to understand this cultural foundation. Additionally, the study has scrutinized the commodity circulation of AI culture expressed in the study from the perspective of critical political economy. In the study, in line with qualitative and quantitative research methods, the grounded theory research design within the scope of exploratory content analysis and the method of reaching from concrete theory to grounded theory have been used. In the study, visual contents generated with AI shared on Instagram have been analyzed. In line with the definition of the concept of "AI culture" and the research findings, it has been observed that the content produced with AI creates a dynamic cultural system, and that popular culture is also reproduced within this system.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence culture, culture and dijital transformation, culture industry, popular culture

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Araştırma makalesi

Yapay zekâ kültürü ve popüler kültürün yapay zekâ üzerinden yeniden üretimi: Yapay zekâ ile üretilen görsel içerik üretimi üzerine bir araştırma

E. Sahra Öztürk | Bağımsız araştırmacı, doktor | Yeditepe Üniversitesi, İstanbul, Türkiye (mezun) | elm.sahra@gmail.com | https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5202-7270

Öz

Literatürde, yapay zekâ (YZ) kavramının ontolojisi doğrultusunda mühendislik alanlarında sıklıkla araştırıldığı ve sosyoloji, antropoloji ve iletişim bilimcileri tarafından incelenen iletişim ve kültür çalışmaları kapsamında çeşitli kaynaklar bulunduğu gözlemlense de, YZ'nin kültürel yaratıcı içerik üretimindeki rolüne ilişkin bir tanım eksikliği olduğu görülmektedir. Bu doğrultuda çalışma, YZ ile üretilen içeriklerin kendine özgü bir kültür oluşturduğuna dair bir yaklaşım sunmayı amaçlamış; bu kültürel zemini kavramak için "yapay zekâ (YZ) kültürü" ifadesi tercih edilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışmada ifade edilen YZ kültürünün meta dolaşımı, eleştirel ekonomi politik perspektifle incelenmiştir. Çalışmada, karma yöntem araştırması yapılmıştır. Bu amaçla keşfedici içerik analizi kapsamında gömülü teori araştırma deseni ile somut teoriden gömülü teoriye ulaşma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Çalışmada bir çeşit sosyal medya ağı olan Instagram uygulamasında YZ kullanarak içerik üretenler ve bu içerik üreticileri tarafından paylaşılan görsel içerikler kategorileştirilerek analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada tanımlanan YZ kültürü kavramının araştırma bulguları doğrultusunda YZ ile üretilen içeriklerin kendine ait dinamik bir kültür sistemi oluşturduğu, aynı zamanda bu sistem içerisinde popüler kültürün de yeniden üretildiği görülmüştür.

Anahtar kelimeler

yapay zekâ, yapay zekâ kültürü, kültür endüstrisi, popüler kültür, kültür ve dijital dönüşüm

Atıf

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Introduction

Culture refers to the values, norms, and material products created by a particular group (Giddens, 1989, p. 31). On the other hand, popular culture, which centers on entertainment as an input for the daily reproduction of labor, characterizes the dominant culture within everyday life. Popular culture supports dominant economic and social relations and also represents the concrete form of mass culture, which is an economic and ideological reflection of mass production. Popular culture encompasses "folk beliefs, practices, and objects rooted in local traditions, as well as mass beliefs, practices, and objects produced in political and commercial centers" (Mukerji & Schudson, 1991, p. 3-4). In this regard, popular culture ideologically reproduces a certain lifestyle (Coşgun, 2012, p. 840). Popular culture also encompasses consumers of all educational levels, genders, and ages, as it has a rich spectrum (Güngör, 1993, p. 9). Popular culture differs from other types of culture because it has a constantly changing, short-term structure (Kırık, 2018, p. 36).

Culture is transmitted between generations through language and signs in accordance with its epistemology. Therefore, culture constructs itself through communication. In this direction, mass media acts as a type of cultural and ideological apparatus that ensures the reproduction of culture. In addition to mass media such as newspapers, radio, and television, which are products of technological developments in the 19th and 20th centuries, new media tools of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are shaping culture. In our era, as internet-based digital technologies diversify day by day, the content and distribution of what is produced also diversifies simultaneously. Therefore, technological tools that directly or indirectly shape societies and culture have a decisive role in social practices. In this regard, digital technologies are increasingly moving beyond being mere tools to take on active roles in an increasingly concentrated culture. These roles transform and reshape concepts as well as social practices. Just as the position of the masses plays an important role in establishing culture, the concept of popular culture has also become digitalized due to the positioning of today's masses on digital platforms alongside digital technologies. In line with the diversity of digital technologies, each new digital platform has also begun to create its own unique culture. As a research article, this study aims to reveal that content generated with artificial intelligence (AI) creates its own culture, and the concept of "AI culture" is proposed within the scope of the study. At the same time, it clarifies that popular culture is reproduced within the scope of AI culture.

Popular culture and digital transformation

Culture is being shaped by mass media around the concept of popular culture within the social and cultural structure of industrial capitalism. Popular culture, as a mass produced commercial culture (Storey, 2001, p. 13), expresses a social phenomenon and has the power to influence the society in which it exists. The defining feature of popular culture is that it is a form of culture produced and appreciated by the majority. Therefore, popular culture characterizes the dominant culture in everyday life. According to Erol Mutlu (2005, p. 317), popular culture, which is a cultural sphere specific to everyday life and related to other subcultures, can not be considered independently of industries due to its close relationship with capitalism. Popular culture products are produced and distributed by an industry focused on economic profit, but they also take into account the preferences, interests, and other concerns of society regarding the cultural product being produced. There is no question of compulsory acceptance, as in mass culture. In this regard, John Fiske (2021, p. 109-110) states that the primary producers of popular culture are not the culture industries, but rather the masses. With this approach, he emphasizes that

popular culture differs from the concept of mass culture, in which cultural products produced by the culture industry are imposed on the masses without their preference. From this perspective, the concept of popular culture is a culture that develops outside of the culture distributed and disseminated by mass media (Hall as cited in Özbek, 2002, p. 90). However, popular culture can not be considered separately from the media ecosystem. Because mass media plays a significant role in the production and circulation of popular culture (Sarıgül, 2019, p. 39). At the same time, popular culture also has industrial dimensions. Because mass production is shaped by popular culture in order for the capitalist system which has different and varied categories such as clothing, food and drink, transportation, and entertainment in everyday life to continue. Therefore popular culture consequently supports both dominant economic and social relations (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 4-5). Within the scope of its main characteristics, popular culture reshapes cultural values; the producers and sources of popular culture products are known; the transmission and distribution of popular culture products occurs through technology (Çiğdem, 2005, p. 50).

Culture is undoubtedly transmitted through communication and is constantly shaped by the types and tools of communication required by the era. Because, culture can not be considered separately from the digital communication tools required by the era. Therefore, when analyzing changing events in society from a cultural perspective, it is also necessary to examine the communication tools of that era and culture (Postman, 2014, p. 19). As is well known, the new communication culture that has emerged with the impact of digitalization affects all stages of communication (Manovich, 2001, p. 19). Manuel Castells (2001, p. 372) emphasizes that information and communication technologies have spread throughout all layers of modern social life and that, since the 1980s, the interaction between processes has brought about a new information-based economy and a new culture, along with a new social structure called the network society. Howard Rheingold (1993, p. 5) points out that the crowd located in digital space “can do almost anything a human being can do in reality, leaving their bodies behind”. This is important because digital space, with the new forms of communication it brings, offers a world where many activities can be carried out and is therefore closely related to culture. Beyond the diversity of digital technologies themselves, the variety of activities that can be performed with these technologies is reshaping the concept of culture by diversifying it in line with its epistemology. Within this scope, digital culture, a concept that redefines the notion of culture in relation to digital space, refers to the value system that emerges from the activities of the audience and media producers located in digital space (Deuze, 2006, p. 64). Digital culture, which has emerged and developed through digital technologies, facilitates the dissemination and popularization of cultural values (Skivko, Korneeva & Kolmykova, 2020, p. 62). According to Jan van Dijk (2018, p. 293), there are seven fundamental characteristics of digital culture. These are pre-programming and creativity, modularity, collage, user generation, speed, visualization, and digitization. These features enable everyone in the online environment to create content to the extent of their tools and opportunities, to break down existing content and use it in other contexts, to visualize content, and to digitize analog content. Every digital citizen continuously performs these operations by interacting quickly with others. Importantly, digital culture refers to “the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of people interacting on digital networks that can recreate concrete world cultures or create new types of cultural thought and practice specific to digital networks” (Poepsel, 2018, p. 15). Therefore, while digital culture shapes existing cultural values by copying them, it also constructs a new cultural product or a new system of cultural values. This bases digital culture on two fundamental sources: one is digitized cultural elements, and the other is cultural content

created in digital space (Pawluczuk, 2019; Rab, 2007; as cited in Ercansungur and Çetin, 2023, p. 571-572).

As emphasized by Emine Yavaşgel and Eli Turdubaeva (2021, p. 25-26), digital culture which is progressively expanding its place as a part of culture, has developed the individual and transformed them into a digital sage. In other words, the formation of collective intelligence among groups with different areas of expertise or interest, positioned within the digital space created by the technology industry and the media platforms created by the media industry, has paved the way for the collective production of both knowledge and culture. This has facilitated the emergence of a participatory culture in which individuals can create their own digital content (Jenkins, 2009, p. 7). Therefore, digital contents produced, stored, and circulated through digital technologies, constitute the components of participatory culture. In this regard, from the perspective of media studies, audiences that were consumers in traditional media have become active and participatory, transforming into producing audiences in new media (Jenkins, 2014, p. 269). The diversification of produced content, the proliferation of media platforms, and their becoming interchangeable have given rise to the concept of media convergence (Hay & Couldry, 2011, p. 474). Therefore, convergence is defined as a process shaped by the social interaction established between audiences positioned on platforms where multiple media functions come together. The concept of convergence culture has been defined as the influence of audiences who are active and participatory from the first stage of production on these platforms, not only on the technological but also on the cultural dimension (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3).

Based on the aforementioned conceptual diversity, studies examining the relationship between digital space and culture in the literature reveal that each stage of development of the internet and digital technologies, and consequently the dynamically multiplying and diversifying media platforms, are reflected in the cultural dimension and conceptualized from different perspectives: “Internet culture” (Porter, 1997), “virtual culture” (Jones, 1997), “cyber culture” (Bell, Loader, Pleace and Schuler, 2004), “digital visual culture” (Kafel, Cashen, & Gardiner, 2009), “smartphone culture” (Vincent & Haddon, 2017), “twitter culture” (DeCarlo, 2018), “visual social media ‘Instagram’ culture” (Leaver, Highfield & Abidin, 2020), “social media culture” (Murthy, 2025). The reason for this conceptual diversity, as mentioned above, stems from the diversity of communication tools in the era we live in. The proliferation of communication tools in both quantitative and qualitative terms, both as continuations of each other and as functionally distinct from each other, is reshaping the concept of culture as it changes and transforms communication forms. In this vein, as it has been observed that the use of AI technologies, which are increasingly common today, in various forms across different communication tools is reshaping culture and even creating a culture of its own, this study introduces a new concept to the literature by proposing the term AI culture.

Artificial intelligence culture

Within the scope of studies examining the relationship between AI and culture in the literature; topics such as the impact of AI on society and cultural values, its functionality in creative and cultural industries (Sucu, 2019; Uzun, Akkuzu & Kayrıcı, 2021; Chen & Zhang, 2022; Hendriks, Mehler, Sturm and Buxmann, 2024; Bareither, 2024; Zhang, 2025) have been analyzed, but no conceptual and definitive definition regarding the culture of AI has been presented. In this context, the concept of AI culture is claimed and defined in this study to describe how AI has developed its own dynamic cultural system.

AI is defined as “a machine-based system that performs human-like cognitive functions and can predict, make suggestions or decisions, affecting real or virtual environments for a set of defined objectives” (OECD, 2019, p. 6). AI is a common term used to describe computer systems that can perceive their surroundings, think, and in some cases learn, and act in response to what they perceive and their objectives. AI can be analyzed in three types according to its layers: (1) Perceiving AI, (2) thinking AI, and (3) acting AI. Perceptive AI has a structure that hears, sees, and speaks; examples of this type include navigation systems, language translation systems, driverless vehicles, and other technologies. Thinking AI, on the other hand, possesses a structure that understands, perceives, and can plan; planning and analysis systems, deep learning, decision-making systems, etc., are examples of this type. The third type, mobile AI, has a cognitive, creative, physical, and reactive structure; machine-to-machine communication systems, robotic process automation, adaptive and collaborative systems are examples of this type (PwC, 2018, p. 6-7). Although machine learning, artificial neural networks, and deep learning are associated with engineering fields due to the concept of AI being a technological product in line with its ontology, it is also defined by different disciplines. Today, the concept of AI is reflected in many different social areas, primarily economic and political, as well as art and sports. From a cultural perspective, based on the three types of AI listed above, it is understood that AI is structured in such a way that it can read cultural values, convey them verbally or in writing, analyze them by reasoning within itself, produce in line with its creativity, or reinterpret what already exists.

Before discussing studies on AI regarding culture in the literature, it is necessary to mention previous studies that examined by building a bridge between algorithms and culture like “algorithmic culture”. Basicly, “an algorithm is any well-defined computational procedure that takes some value, or set of values, as input and produces some value, or set of values, as output” (Cormen, Leiserson, Rivest & Stein, 2009, p. 5). In other words, an algorithm computational process which transform the input to the output. In this sense, when comparing AI with algorithms, it is seen that AI also has an algorithmic structure within itself. Therefore, AI also works through algorithms. However, it can not be assumed that every algorithmic structure is the same. Because, algorithms differ from eachother. So, it would be incorrect to reduce the algorithm to a single concept; there are various categories. Simple recursive algorithms, backtracking algorithms, greedy algorithms, dynamic programming algorithms, divide-and-conquer algorithms, branch-and-bound algorithms, brute force algorithms are a few examples of these categories (Bockmayr & Reinert, 2014, p. 1003). Therefore, when comparing AI with an algorithm as a concept, it should be specified which type of algorithm it is being compared with. For example, Machine Learning (ML) “employs algorithms to mimic human cognitive processes, allowing computers to make decisions, recognize patterns, and extract insights from data, thus bridging the gap between artificial and human intelligence” (Karimi, Abubakar, Mustafa & Ahmad, 2024, p. 31). In this sense, although ML and AI have algorithmic similarities, there is also distinction between two. ML enables algorithms to learn from data and develop performance without hard coding or explicit programming while AI simulates human intelligence processes (Karimi et al., 2024, p. 30).

Through digital technologies, algorithms have a determining and shaping power over daily life practices. In line with the operation of search engines and recommendation algorithms, algorithms affect many different areas of daily life, from what to buy and what to watch, to what information to consume and where to communicate. In other words, algorithms guide users in every decision they make on digital platforms, in every choice they make, and in every con-

tent they encounter on these platforms. Therefore, the increasing influence of digital platforms shaped by algorithms in daily life has also reflected in cultural elements. In this regard, the concept of "algorithmic culture" has also gained importance. It has been observed that studies on algorithmic culture address not only the functions of algorithms to direct preferences and shape perception, but also failures and potential ethical problems in the operating principles they employ to achieve these goals (Galloway, 2006; Striphas, 2015; Willson, 2016; Seyfert & Roberge, 2016; Hallinan & Striphas; 2016). As defined by Ted Striphas (2012, February 1), algoritmic culture refers to "the use of computational processes to sort, classify, and hierarchize people, places, objects, and ideas". Striphas (2015, p. 406) has focused on the etymology and epistemology of the word algorithm, connecting it with the information and the crowd, and emphasized that algorithmic culture is the customization of processes that include decision making and discussion forms aimed at determining the values, practices and products of certain social groups.

When algorithmic culture is considered, it is easily seen that this concept has been claimed in line with the conditions of its own technological developments, just as this study defines the AI culture. Although the period in which the concept has been discussed is close to the present day, it is predictable for the concepts to change and transform due to the rapid development and diversification of the functional areas of technology and digital platforms. In light of the explanations made above regarding engineering disciplines, it is seen that the word of algorithm mentioned in the concept of algorithmic culture is not sufficient to cover all algorithmic categories that have emerged in today's technological developments. Because, each algorithmic category has different functions. For this reason, it is a requirement for today to make sub definitions regarding which algorithmic categories the concept of algorithmic culture encompasses, before comparing algorithmic culture with other new concepts defined in the context of culture and digital technologies. In this context, Lev Manovich (2020, p. 6-7) expresses the integration of AI into everyday cultural life by making a general comparison between the old and the new through artistic creations created by algorithms and AI:

> While algorithms have been employed in artistic creation by artists since the 1960s, today industrial scale "cultural AI" is built into devices and services used by billions of people. Instead of being an instrument of a single artistic imagination, AI has become a mechanism for influencing the imaginations of billions.

As emphasized by Helge Rønning and Knut Lundby (1991, p. 230), culture contains many connotations within itself and has two basic uses. The first is the form used in the social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, while the other form is associated with aesthetics, which is identified with artistic practices. In line with this division, studies examining the relationship between culture and AI in the literature have also been found to differ from one another. For instance, Anthony Elliott (2018), in his book *The Culture of AI*, has examined how AI impacts daily life and contemporary societies. Octavio Kulesz (2018) has scrutinized the effect of AI on culture focusing on artist, public and creative industries in Global North and South. Alexa Hagerty and Igor Rubinov (2019) have handled the ethical implications of AI and indicated in their work that the social impacts of AI vary depending on the geographical environment. Baptiste Caramiaux (2024) has discuessed the interactions of AI with the museum and cultural heritage sectors. It has been observed that studies in the literature have examined the functional capabilities of AI,

its effects, and its typical outcomes on both society and culture. The following are studies found in the literature regarding the functionality, effects of AI in creative work and its impacts in creative industries within the context of artistic practices as an extention of culture.

Lev Manovich and Emanuele Arielli (2024) have examined how AI transforms the understanding of aesthetics, creativity, design and artistic perception, bringing and contributing perspectives from aesthetics to psychology of art, from computer science to media theory. According to Sujood Alkhraisat (2025, p. 5), "AI presents artists, animators, and creators with previously inconceivable tools to draw upon the wealth of culture, re-imagine canonical themes, and explore new narratives". The use of AI in artistic creativity is not limited to tangible products but is also used in developing intangible outputs such as music (Moura, Castrucci & Hindley, 2023, p. 534). While AI benefits the creative industry, particularly in the field of design and editing, increases efficieny and productivity, AI also causes negative impacts such as creative employees loosing their jobs because of being replaced by AI (Clarencia, Tiranda, Achmad & Sutoyo, 2024, p. 444). Marian Mazzone and Ahmed Elgammal (2019, p. 8) have presented a comparision between human artists and AI, stating that "AI can not replicate the lived experience of a human being; therefore, AI is not able to create art in the same way that human artists do". Dal Yong Jin (2021, p. 54-74), in his book *AI in Cultural Production*, has examined whether the meeting of AI and popular culture advances cultural democratization and creativity. According to his argument, AI appears to be part of copceptual umbrella of cultural democracy. On the other hand, popular culture is amplified by businesses through AI algorithms. In addition, creativity developed with AI is also used to support human creativity and even replace it, with the aim of launching new types of commercial cultural products and analyzing and shaping the cultural preferences of users or consumers.

Although there are contextual studies in the literature on the relationship between AI and culture, even in the context of artistic creativity and production, there is no conceptually clear and precise definition for the culture of AI. Since there is no definitive definition in the literature regarding AI producing its own culture, this study has put forward a definition from the point of view of cultural production generated with AI. In this context, the concept of "AI culture," proposed and defined in this study, refers to the set of cultural values that individuals can create as a new cultural product and reproduce by reshaping existing cultural elements through AI applications in the digital space, in line with their goals, desires, and conscious or unconscious imagination. Within this scope, the concept of AI culture encompasses the various types of culture, such as "national culture," "subculture," "material culture," "spiritual culture," "dominant culture," "counterculture," "mass culture," "folk culture," "high culture," and "popular culture." An example of the relational connection established by AI culture with other cultural varieties: An architectural structure image generated by AI, even if produced in digital space according to the creator's purpose, desire, and imagination in line with the definition of AI culture outlined in this study, is directly related to "material culture", which is a type of culture encompassing the physical elements produced in society and representing one of the two fundamental dimensions of culture, based on the content of the generated object. In this regard, the AI producer is not independent of material culture, even though s/he visually produces an architectural structure that does not physically exist through AI. This is because architecture belongs to material cultural elements. At the same time, s/he is independent of material culture in the sense that s/he produces a fantastic architectural visual that does not exist in material life and even violates the laws of physics. This is because, even though the AI-generated content is an architectural

visual, it can not be considered a material cultural element of society since it does not exist in the material world due to being produced in digital space using AI technology. In this sense, the architectural structure visual produced through AI is created as a product belonging to AI culture by establishing a relational connection with material cultural elements.

Within the conceptual framework, AI culture is an interdisciplinary concept shaped around the morphological and semantic structures of cultural products generated by AI, their use values, and their production, consumption, and distribution patterns. The sole fundamental criterion of the concept of AI culture is that cultural elements are produced by AI. Therefore, the fact that its sole fundamental criterion is based on AI applications distinguishes the concept of AI culture from "digital culture", which is a general concept referring to all digital technologies. In this direction, AI culture is conceptualized as a reduction of digital culture.

The concept of AI culture anticipates the emergence of new concepts as AI technologies diversify over time and their use in daily life increases. As explained above, the adaptation of 'thinking and moving robots' within AI technologies, in line with their layers, to daily life has prepared the ground for the concept of AI culture to produce sub-concepts, particularly in terms of its impact on society, especially social practices. Within the scope of this study's research process, in order to reinforce the concept of AI culture, it has been determined which cultural elements are produced through which AI applications, and these have been categorized in Table 1.

Cultural elements	**The AI applications**
Literature	NovelAI, Sudowrite, ScriptBook, DeepStory
Art	AIVA (music), Leonardo.AI (painting), Dall-E (visual design), ChoreoMaster (dance)
Cinema	It has been determined that there is no application capable of producing feature-length films with today's technology, but applications such as Pictory, Veed, and Pika Labs produce high-quality short-form video content.
Gastronomy	Whisk, Paprika, Plant Jammer
Fashion	Vue.ai

Table 1. Cultural elements and the AI applications[1]

As seen in Table 1, AI culture is developing with AI applications used to produce cultural elements such as literature, art (music, painting, visual design, dance choreography), cinema, gastronomy, and fashion.

AI culture in the cultural industry

In a society, all activities of individuals are shaped according to consumption (Baudrillard, 1988, p. 33). The culture industry, as a product of liberalism and the social relations shaped by it, is also directly proportional to consumption (Horkheimer & Adorno,1996, p. 58). In this sense, cultural products are also positioned as commodities (Koluaçık, 2017, p. 152). Cultural industry products have a spectrum that ranges from works of art to television programs and is expanding further with developing digital technologies. Although these products are cultural products, they are

[1] Table 1 was created in line with the purpose of this study and within the scope of the dates on which the study was conducted.

analyzed in terms of the relationship between production and consumption. In this regard, the AI culture proposed in this study is also examined within the scope of the culture industry in terms of the relationship between production and consumption from the perspestive of critical political economy, and the circulation of AI culture as a commodity is examined.

The total product of society, and therefore total production, is divided into two major categories. One is means of production, and the other is means of consumption. Means of production are "commodities whose form makes their participation in productive consumption necessary or at least possible". Consumption goods, on the other hand, are "commodities that take the form of being incorporated into the individual consumption of the capitalist class and the working class". Although each of these two sections has different branches of production, they form a single large branch of production consisting of the "production of means of production" and the "production of means of consumption" (Marx, 2012, p. 44). The total capital used in production constitutes another major part of social capital, and it consists of two important components: "variable capital", which represents living labor, and "fixed capital", which represents raw materials and tools. The entry of capital into cultural production transforms the product into a commodity. In this sense, cultural production shares similar characteristics with other areas of production. Every product produced is consumed as long as it is used; similarly, the production of a cultural product such as food or imagination is also subject to consumption. For this reason, cultural products are a special type of commodity. The more cultural products are used, the more vitality they possess. For example, the Mona Lisa painting does not diminish no matter how many hundreds of people look at it, and a poem or song does not diminish no matter how often it is repeated. However, if these works of art are converted into commodities with any kind of material value, they do diminish (Lovell, 1998, p. 476-477).

Today, the aforementioned understanding of cultural production has begun to change and transform with digital culture. For instance, NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), which represent a unique digital asset, are the most visible evidence of this change in cultural production. NFTs are works of art produced in the digital space as digital cultural products. For example, when compared to a literary work of art, such as a poem, the more a poem is read, the more it continues to exist and remains inexhaustible. When this poem is physically produced as a book, it becomes subject to consumption. However, unlike a book of poetry, NFTs become subject to consumption in the digital environment as part of the cultural industry, changing hands with cryptocurrency, even without the need for physical production. NFTs are produced and sold in the digital space as cultural elements for the purpose of capitalist production. Therefore, they do not appear to have any material value or even any use value, like a purchased book. However, as they circulate in the digital space, that is, by being sold and exchanged for cryptocurrency, they become commodities.

Cultural objects produced using AI technology can not be consumed if they are used by the masses without a material counterpart, regardless of how much they are desired. As shown in Table 1, cultural elements and the AI applications with which these cultural elements can be produced have been categorized. Any cultural product created with these applications, no matter how much it is viewed, shared, or liked in the digital space, does not become obsolete or run out. However, when sold with cryptocurrency, such as NFTs, or when subject to meta circulation, they become commodities.

However, although AI cultural content has not yet been converted into commodities such as NFTs, it can not be considered separately from the cultural industry. To be more explicit, it is necessary to consider valuation within the scope of the circulation of money or commodities, as expressed by Marx (2011, p. 102-128), through the transformation of commodities and the exchange of money. For example, if any social media content creator earns income from cultural content produced using AI, the cultural products they create in this manner also enter the consumption sphere. An AI content creator produces cultural elements such as visual designs or short films through any AI application listed in Table 1 that provides professional services enabling the creation of such content. There is a company that offers this application as a service. This company provides a service that allows individuals to create content as they wish using the application it has coded and released to the market. In other words, the company makes the application available for use in exchange for a fee. Therefore, the company that provides the application as a service assigns a value to the content creator based on whether the application is used on a monthly subscription basis in a limited, medium, or full package. The AI content creator pays to use the application in order to generate content. This completes the first cycle. This cycle is not a one-time occurrence. Because content creators use this application every time they produce new content and pay the company that owns the application on a monthly basis. The AI cultural product in question reaches a place where it will be useful as a usage value through this circulation. The AI content creator shares the content it has produced in exchange for this money on social media. Based on the content it shares, it gains visibility on digital platforms and enters into agreements such as brand and sponsored collaborations. Consequently, the social media content creator also earns money from the content it produces by paying for it. This way, the second circulation takes place. As can be seen, AI has no value in the physical environment of cultural products. Its value is only determined and circulated in the digital space.

The exchange process proceeds as follows: Any content creator pays to use the application they will produce in order to create a cultural product in AI in line with their purpose. From the content creator's perspective, this results in M-C, or in other words, the exchange of money for content[2]. In this way, AI cultural product becomes commodified. The commodity that changes hands is shared by the content creator on the social media page where they earn money. The content creator recirculates the content through agreements made with brands in line with social media content production criteria, and C-M, in other words, content-money exchange, takes place. In this sense, the change of shape that enables the circulation of the material products of labor takes the form of M-C-M. This process is not one-way, but two-way. When viewed from the perspective of an AI application company that incorporates the pay-per-use model into its usage service, the exchange takes the opposite form, in the C-M direction. Ultimately, it is important to note that the concept of AI culture should not be considered separately from the culture industry within the scope of commodity circulation.

As shown in Figure 1, two types of meta circulation occur. First meta circulation: an AI cultural content producer pays the company that provides the AI application they wish to use to produce their content via subscription, and in return produces their content, thereby exchanging their money for meta. Second meta circulation: The content producer, who has obtained a commodity in exchange for money, earns money in exchange for the commodity, that is, the content s/he

[2] The M-C circulation discussed here is, the money-commodity circulation in Marx's definition. In this study, the term "content" is used to refer to the digital commodity.

produces, by gaining recognition through likes and followers on the digital platform where s/he is positioned and by making agreements such as brand, sponsorship or sales partnership. From the perspective of AI culture content producers, the transformation that enables meta circulation takes the form of money-commodity-money.

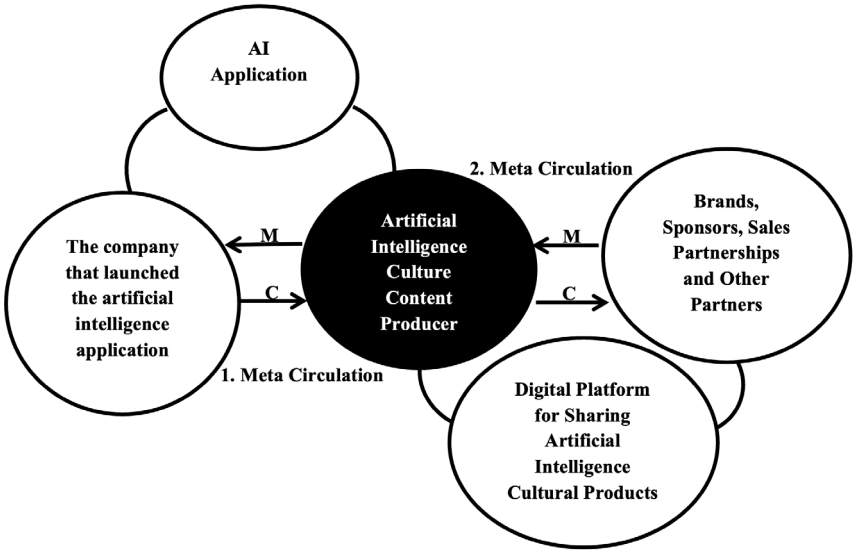

Figure 1. Meta Circulation in the Context of AI Culture[3]

A research on the visual content production generated with AI in the context of AI culture

This research aims to reveal that content generated through AI creates a unique cultural system and to evaluate it in line with the concept of AI culture proposed in the study. At the same time, the research examines the reproduction of popular culture within the scope of AI culture. Although studies have mostly been conducted on the effects of AI on social practices in the literature, it has not totally been examined whether AI creates a unique culture in the context of visual creativity. For this reason, there is no clear definition of AI creating its own culture. In this regard, the significance of this research is to examine if or not the visual content creators on Instagram creates a unique culture through AI applications and to present an inductive inference from the concept of AI culture in the direction of visual contents generated with AI.

In this research, the method of moving from concrete theory to grounded theory is used within the scope of exploratory content analysis based on qualitative and quantitative research methods. In this regard, the research employs inductive content analysis. In other words, although limited samples of visual contents created through AI on Instagram have been examined, this study presents an inductive definition not only for visual contents on Instagram but also for other cultural creations generated with AI applications, e.g. in Table 1, on other digital platforms. In this direction, the research universe of this study is the visual contents created using AI and shared on Instagram, a type of social media management network. The research's sample consists of visual contents created by Turkish and foreign AI content creators with over 10,000 followers, as defined by the condition of being a medium-sized phenomenon on a digital platform, in accordance with the systematic random sampling method, between July 13-15, 2025. Due to the struc-

[3] Figure 1 has been prepared to explain meta circulation in the context of AI culture in line with the purpose of this study.

ture of the methodology adopted in the research, multiple techniques have been used. Within the scope of the data included in the study: (1) The profiles of AI content creators have been examined using quantitative and qualitative content analysis, (2) in the analysis process of visual content shared by AI content creators, a semiotic approach has been used to examine whether they produce the new cultural products through AI or reproduce popular culture.

The limitations of this research are as follows: (1) The samples found have been analyzed due to the lack of a sufficient number of Turkish AI content producers, as explained its reason below, to make a comparison between Turkish and foreign AI content producers. (2) Only images and videos generated with AI, as one element of culture, have been examined. (3) Only first 6 images and videos, as current works, from each sampled profiles have been analyzed. (4) The examination has been conducted on a single digital platform, Instagram, a type of digital server to share images and videos. In this direction, the analysis has been conducted on the first six pieces of content shared on the pages of six Turkish and six foreign content creators with over 10,000 followers as a sample. The research has been limited the number of Turkish and foreign AI content producers to six each, is due to the lack of Turkish AI content producers with 10,000 or more followers on Instagram and the inability to access more Turkish content producers because, unlike foreign content producers, they do not name their user accounts according to the content they produce but use their personal names. In other words, the research samples have been limited because the Turkish content producers use their personal names on their Instagram profiles.

The visual contents generated with AI, sampled in line with the research, are categorized according to cultural elements and analyzed based on the research questions listed below. Research questions analyzed in line with the purpose of the research: (1) Can AI content creators produce their own unique cultural products through AI applications? (2) Are AI content creators reproducing popular culture through AI applications?

Findings and discussion

In line with the sample and limitations of the study, AI content creators on Instagram were coded and examined under two headings: six Turkish and six foreign creators. Their follower counts, gender, types of content shared, content topics, and cultural dimensions are categorized in Table 2 and Table 3.

Sequence Number	Number of Followers	Gender	Type of Visual Content Sharing	Subject of the Content	Cultural Dimension
1	60,4B	Man	Image and video	Bringing together Turkish politicians, Turkish and foreign artists, and businesspeople in real life for a common purpose.	Fiction and political satire related to popular culture.
2	107B	Man	Video	Visualization of the overweight and baby versions of the actors in Turkish TV series.	Fiction related to popular culture.

3	44,2B	Man	Image	The inclusion of political leaders and politicians as characters in Turkish TV series and their portrayal as fashion icons.	Fiction and political satire related to popular culture.
4	29,8B	Woman	Image and video	The producer's self-reproduction in daily life: The production of content such as businesswoman, fashion icon, or older version of herself through her own depiction.	Fantastic design related to material culture.
5	360,3B	Man	Image and video	(1) Turkish TV series characters as cartoon characters, (2) how cartoon characters look in real life, (3) depictions of foreign pop stars wearing traditional Turkish clothing.	Fiction related to popular culture.
6	1M	Man	Image and video	Visualization of species that could be produced by the mating of different animal species that do not exist in real life, and depiction of iconic characters from foreign cinema in real life.	(1) Original fiction and fantasy design through AI, (2) fiction and fantasy design related to popular culture.

Table 2. Category of Turkish AI content creators[4]

As seen in Table 2, the Turkish AI content creators included in the sample have been categorized according to their number of followers, gender, types of visual content they share, content topics, and cultural dimensions. By analyzing the current six contents in the profiles of each sample, it was observed that each produced content for entertainment purposes, all but one drew inspiration from popular culture, and all combined elements that will never come together in real life with AI, such as people, objects, etc. In other words, they create a new digital entertainment element by bringing together elements, or in other words, by creating fiction or fantastic designs. Only one female content creator was identified among the samples, and unlike the others, she was seen to reproduce only her own image and desires she wished to fulfill in daily life by establishing a relational connection with material culture. In line with the research questions of the study: (1) It was determined that they produce their own unique cultural elements and contents through AI in accordance with their own thoughts, desires, and goals, and (2) that the majority of Turkish AI content creators produce content inspired by popular culture, thereby reproducing popular culture through AI applications. Beyond the research questions, it was observed that the sharing, commenting, and liking of the original posts created by the content creators analyzed in the study by different Instagram accounts contributed to the spread of AI culture. At the same time, it has been determined that Turkish AI culture content creators share content produced in line with tags such as "DM for collaboration" on their Instagram accounts and "#sponsored, #ad,

[4] In Table 2 and the subsequent categorized Table 3, the letter "B" indicates "thousand" and the letter "M" indicates "million" on Instagram.

#collaboration" under the content they share for the purpose of making agreements such as brand, sponsorship, and sales partnerships. This also demonstrates that AI culture is a different form of the cultural industry, as producers of AI cultural elements and products have introduced their products into the circulation of commodities.

Sequence Number	Number of Followers	Gender	Type of Visual Content Sharing	Subject of the Content	Cultural Dimension
1	803B	Man	Image and video	Designing industrial design products that do not exist in everyday life.	Fantastic design related to design culture.
2	144B	Unknown	Image and video	Depictions of creatures that do not actually exist.	Original fantasy design and fiction through AI.
3	1,2M	Man	Video	Light effects, mesmerizing visual effects.	Original visual design through AI.
4	147B	Man	Image and video	Depictions of world political leaders that contradict their sexual identities and their visualization as fashion icons.	Fiction and political satire related to popular culture and material culture.
5	210B	Woman	Image and video	Makeup and fashion adaptations for human, animal, and elf characters.	(1) Original fiction and fantasy design through AI, (2) fiction and fantasy design related to material culture and popular culture.
6.	94,7B	Man	Video	A depiction of human emotions through a fantastical world (world of clouds).	Original fiction through AI.

Table 3. Category of foreign AI content creators

As shown in Table 3, the sample of foreign AI content creators whose nationalities are obscure, was categorized according to the number of followers, gender, types of visual content shared, subject matter of the content, and cultural dimension. By analyzing the currrent six contents in the profiles of each sample, it was observed that each of them created fictional and fantastic designs using AI within the scope of digital culture, and that two of them were inspired by popular culture and established a relational connection with material culture. Unlike Turkish content creators, one foreign content creator was identified as engaging in political satire within the scope of systematic random sampling, and it was observed that the content they produced depicted political leaders in a manner inconsistent with their sexual identity. Unlike the content produced by Turkish content creators, it has been observed that foreign content creators produce content

within the scope of design culture, such as industrial design and visual design with lighting effects. Additionally, it has been understood that foreign content creators focus more on new fantasy content within the scope of their own cultural values rather than drawing inspiration from popular culture and reshaping existing themes, and that the popularity of the content they produce is determined by its circulation intensity in the digital space. In this regard, within the scope of the study's research questions: (1) It was determined that the analyzed foreign AI content creators produced original and new cultural elements according to their own goals, consciousness, and desires through AI, thus producing elements and products belonging to AI culture, and (2) they did not prefer to draw inspiration from popular culture. This also shows that AI culture is dominant among foreign AI content creators. At the same time, it has been determined that Turkish AI culture content creators have more sponsors, brands, etc., as clearly stated in their profile information. As observed on the pages of Turkish AI culture content creators, foreign AI culture content creators also use the phrase "DM for collaboration" in both English and their own languages, and use tags such as "#sponsored, #ad" under the content they share. This indicates that foreign AI culture content creators monetize their AI culture products by circulating them through profit-driven agreements.

The hyperreality of visual content generated with AI

Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and simulation express the understanding of hyperreality which replaces and transcends reality. Baudrillard (1994, p. 2-3) states of a "hyperreality sheltered from the imaginary, and from any distinction between the real and the imaginary, leaving room only for the orbital recurrence of models and for the simulated generation of differences". In this sense, hyperreality is a synthetically produced reality. In this context, hyperreality has emerged not merely as an imitation or reflection, but as a transactional twin of reality (Baudrillard, 2016, p. 131). In this direction hyperreality concerns the perception of everything in the simulated universe as a reality into itself, detached from reality. Fiction and artificiality have become decisive in social arrangements within the simulated society, reality has become merely a reproducible, equivalent representation. In this context, reality itself has been systematically perfected and ultimately eliminate (Baudrillard, 2016, p. 3).

As he has exampled the hyperrality with Disneyland, a fantasy world removed from reality, Baudrillard (1988; as cited in Singh and Singh, 2021, p. 295) has also envisioned the hyperreality generated by today's digital technologies with the concept of "primordial soup" of postmodern hyperreality. In the direction of his argument, it is seen that the difference between reality and artificiality has become even more blurred in today's digital ecosystem. Baudrillard has summarized the hyperreality in four stages; symbolic order, counterfeits, production and simulation (Foss, Foss and Trapp, 2002; as cited in Cunningham, 2024, p. 3). In this direction, the findings of this study has been examined through these four stages. It has been firstly observed in terms of symbolic order, first stage of hyperreality, it has been seen that the images and videos analzed in the study are a kind of reflection of reality. Although some images and videos created with AI are unrealistic, e.g. sixth one on the list of Turkish content creators, they as simulacrs of reality, form a copy of the copy. According to second stage, counterfeits, it has been seen that the images and videos, e.g. fourth one on the list of foreign content creators, mask the reality. In this contaxt, it is understood that these creations not solely mask the reality; distorts the reality. In line with the production as third stage that it has been noticed the images and videos created through AI applications and shared on Instagram, e.g. third one on the list of foreign content creators, are in-

distinguishable from tradional digital art based on human creation. In this sense, digital art created by human and art production generated by AI are intertwined. When it is made a comparison between the digital art created by human and the digital art generated with AI, the distinstion disappears. Besides, all these images and videos analyzed in the study bear no relation to reality in terms of simulation. These images and videos are no longer the representations of reality but new realities of themselves. In other words, the hyperreality creates its own independent reality. Apart from these findings, it has also been observed that the woman AI content creator in the list of Turkish content creators, constructs her digital identity through self-image production. In other words, it has been understood that she creates a holistic self-concept by transforming her own representations in the contaxt of different lifestyles and social status, compared to other creators.

Diversity and inclusivity of AI culture

The findings indicate that AI culture increases diversity and inclusivity in the process of creation cultural elements. In line with the findings, it allows all professional and amateur content creators on Instagram to both reshape existing popular visuals and create unique ones, which are independent of popular culture. As can be seen, this study has designed as research conducted via Instagram, and the findings have drawn based on inductive reasoning. Therefore, within the scope of AI culture, only visual design content has been examined from among cultural elements. However, as shown in Table 1 categorized in this study, AI cultural elements are not negligible. For example, the AI application called NovelAI makes it possible to reinterpret an existing novel as well as write a novel that has not been written before. Another example is that it is possible to produce musical works through an AI application called AIVA. With this application, both popular cultural products, such as popular songs, can be reproduced by changing the lyrics or tonality, and original content, i.e., songs that have never been made before, can be produced. Although this study conducted a limited research on Instagram focusing solely on visual design among cultural elements, it has been understood that the study is also valid for other cultural elements. While AI culture appeals to all types of content creators in terms of diversity, it also incorporates other cultural elements in terms of inclusivity, as shown in Table 1 created during the timeframe of this research.

AI culture in the context of cultural production

In the context of cultural production, AI culture is also part of the cultural industry. Although AI culture content has not yet been converted into a commodity sold with cryptocurrency, such as NFTs, which are a digital cultural product, according to the time frame of this research, in other words, even if it is not a direct commodity, it is indirectly included in consumption. Therefore, any cultural product created with AI does not become obsolete no matter how much it is used. However, it is consumed in terms of its exchange value and use value. In this regard, the study also draws attention to the functioning of AI culture in cultural production. As mentioned above, products belonging to AI culture are not yet commodities per se. However, this study has identified two key points demonstrating that AI culture is not independent of the cultural industry. (1) AI applications that provide services in a professional context, such as those listed in Table 1, charge producers for using the application, (2) AI content creators earn money through commercial agreements made with the digital platforms where they are positioned based on the content they produce. In line with these two points, it is understood that AI cultural products become commodified as a result of their value being assessed and circulated on digital platforms.

Therefore, this circulation of commodities demonstrates that AI culture is also part of the cultural industry.

Conclusion

Within the scope of the development of digital technologies, every new technological product introduced for use not only continues the previous technology and practices but also creates its own production, consumption, and usage practices. Therefore, the spread and digitization of communication technologies, along with the positioning of audiences across various and diverse digital media tools, the content they produce and share, are reshaping social practices. At the same time, the diversity within digital technologies themselves and the differentiation of activities that can be performed with these technologies are reshaping the concept of culture. In this direction, while analyzing the changing and evolving practices in society from a cultural perspective, it is necessary to examine the communication tools of that era and culture together. This paves the way for the redefinition of the concept of culture and the accompanying changing and evolving cultural values, elements, and objects through digital transformations.

Although the abundance of definitions in the literature leads to conceptual confusion, it is observed that, depending on the era of digital technologies, their diversity, usage patterns, and positive or negative outcomes, there are both similar and differing definitions. The similarities and differentitations of the concepts depending on the era of digital technologies, have triggered this study to reveal that the contents created through AI form a unique culture. In this regard, the concept of “AI culture,”defined in the context of making inductive inference through the visual content production, and scrutinized from the perspective of critical political economy in this study, is significant in that it offers a new perspective on the field. Besides, the study has aimed to scrutinize whether popular culture is reproduced in the direction of the AI culture.

The research conducted in this study reveals that each individual positioned in the digital realm and producing through AI technologies has a purpose, conscious or unconscious imagination or desires, which give rise to a dynamic culture developing through these technologies, in other words, AI culture. The analysis results of the research show that the differentiation between the content produced by Turkish and foreign AI content creators indicates that AI culture can also diversify within the scope of content production. In this regard, it has been determined that while Turkish AI content creators reproduce popular culture, foreign AI content creators produce original and new cultural contents with AI applications. This also demonstrates that AI cultural production consists of two types: (1) The production of AI culture content and (2) the production of the content that reproduces popular culture. Therefore, it has been understood that cultural products generated with AI are both nourished by popular culture and can also shape popular culture with the original AI culture contents. Additionally, when conducted with the concept of hyperreality in line with its function of creating its own reality, it has been noticed that the cultural products generated with AI, are the realities of their own artificial environment.

In conclusion, in line with the purpose and findings of this study, it is recommended that the concept of AI culture, which is defined in the context of visual content production in this study, should be examined from interdisciplinary perspectives, as it is both a contemporary concept and one that will see the scope of AI in social practices expand significantly in the near future. Additionally, it is anticipated that the concept of AI culture will establish a newsystem of cultural

values and, in line with this, as the scope of AI technologies expands, sub-concepts of AI culture may also emerge. At the same time, since this study only conducted research on Instagram in terms of visual design within the scope of cultural elements, it is believed that further studies on other cultural elements listed in Table 1 of this study will contribute to the field.

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