

## The Role of Social Media in the Formation of Global Cultural Identity

Agnita Yolanda<sup>1</sup> , Ria Wuri Andary<sup>2</sup> , Ilma Saakinah Tamsil<sup>3</sup> , Khalil Zaman<sup>4</sup> , Sun Wei<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Mazar University, Afghanistan

<sup>5</sup>Beijing Institute of Technology, China

### ABSTRACT

**Background.** In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have become a dominant force in shaping cultural identities across the globe. The rapid dissemination of information and interactive communication fostered by platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Facebook has significantly contributed to the formation of a shared global cultural identity.

**Purpose.** This research explores the role of social media in influencing cultural perceptions, values, and behaviors among diverse communities. The primary objective of this study is to analyze how social media facilitates cultural exchange and contributes to the convergence of cultural norms, while also highlighting the tensions between global and local identities.

**Method.** This study adopts a qualitative approach using content analysis and semi-structured interviews involving 30 active social media users from different cultural backgrounds. Data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and narratives regarding cultural identity construction.

**Results.** The findings reveal that social media functions both as a platform for cultural homogenization and as a space for cultural hybridity. While global trends and popular content promote a sense of shared identity, users also reinterpret and adapt these influences to fit their local cultures, resulting in the emergence of hybrid cultural expressions. Moreover, the study indicates that social media plays a crucial role in youth identity formation and in promoting cross-cultural understanding.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, social media acts as a double-edged sword supporting the development of a global cultural identity while preserving unique cultural elements. Future studies are recommended to further explore this dynamic in different regional contexts.

### KEYWORDS

Cultural Exchange, Cultural Hybridization, Digital Culture, Global Identity, Social Media

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### Correspondence:

Agnita Yolanda,  
[agnitayolanda@staff.uma.ac.id](mailto:agnitayolanda@staff.uma.ac.id)

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### INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed the way people communicate, share information, and engage with the world (Aroldi, 2020). It has become a central component of daily life, enabling users to connect across geographical boundaries and cultural differences. The integration of social media into personal, educational, and professional spheres demonstrates its pervasive influence in shaping



contemporary human interactions (Bohančov, 2023). In recent years, its role has extended beyond communication, influencing values, norms, and identities on a global scale.

Cultural identity, traditionally shaped by local customs, language, religion, and social norms, is now increasingly influenced by global digital interactions (Adji, 2024). The borderless nature of social media provides a platform for exposure to diverse cultural expressions, contributing to the creation of new forms of cultural understanding (Agana, 2022). Individuals, especially youth, are constantly engaging with content that reflects not only their local culture but also global trends, shaping a hybrid sense of identity (Aldás, 2019).

Technological advancement and widespread internet access have accelerated the integration of global media into local contexts (Ray, 2025). Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow users to consume and produce cultural content in real time, leading to both homogenization and diversification of cultural identities (Anthony, 2023). This phenomenon has attracted the attention of scholars, particularly those in education, sociology, and cultural studies, as it challenges traditional frameworks of identity formation (Chand, 2024).

The influence of social media on cultural perceptions is most evident among digital natives, who often navigate multiple cultural spheres simultaneously (Banerjee, 2022). Their online interactions, language use, fashion choices, and values reflect a blend of global and local influences (Yoon, 2023). Such changes suggest a shift in the way cultural identity is conceptualized and experienced in the 21st century.

Globalization has been a long-standing driver of cultural exchange, but social media accelerates this process by enabling constant interaction and participation in cultural trends (Chen, 2024). The global visibility and virality of content contribute to the formation of shared cultural reference points, often referred to as “global culture.” This global culture, however, is neither uniform nor universally accepted, creating complexities in identity negotiation (Demerdash, 2024).

Despite its benefits, the influence of social media on cultural identity also raises concerns about cultural homogenization and the erosion of indigenous traditions (Duraisingh, 2021). The dominance of Western media and commercial culture on global platforms often overshadows local narratives (West, 2023). Consequently, understanding the role of social media in shaping cultural identity requires careful consideration of both its empowering and potentially marginalizing effects (Biró, 2020).

Limited empirical research has examined how individuals interpret and integrate global cultural content into their sense of identity (Dahal, 2023). Most existing studies focus on the technical and psychological aspects of social media use, overlooking its cultural dimensions. There remains a gap in understanding how social media facilitates or hinders the development of a cohesive global cultural identity among users from diverse backgrounds (Gavra, 2024).

Current literature does not fully explore how users reconcile their local cultural values with global influences encountered on social media platforms (Lopes, 2021). The complex processes through which individuals construct and negotiate identity in this digital space are still under-researched (Lin, 2021). Questions about authenticity, representation, and cultural appropriation remain inadequately addressed.

Few studies investigate the long-term implications of digital cultural exposure for educational institutions, especially in multicultural and multilingual settings (Arthur, 2019). The educational impact of globalized media content on students’ cultural awareness and identity formation is an area that needs deeper exploration (Dobrovolska, 2022). There is a pressing need for interdisciplinary research combining education, media studies, and cultural theory to bridge this knowledge gap (Roy, 2022).

Understanding how different age groups, particularly adolescents and young adults, respond to global cultural narratives on social media is also underdeveloped (Oyedemi, 2024). These groups are the most active on digital platforms and are in crucial stages of identity formation (Mevsimler, 2021). Investigating their experiences may provide valuable insights into broader cultural shifts influenced by technology (Hu, 2024).

Identifying this gap is essential for developing educational strategies that respond to changing identity landscapes (Arthur, 2019). Filling this gap would allow educators and policymakers to design culturally responsive curricula that reflect the realities of students living in a digitally interconnected world (Oweis, 2022). An informed approach can help preserve cultural diversity while encouraging global understanding.

Addressing this issue also supports efforts to foster digital literacy and critical thinking about media consumption (Paksiutov, 2023). By understanding how social media influences identity, learners can be empowered to engage with content more consciously and responsibly (Yoon, 2023). This contributes to the development of culturally aware and socially responsible digital citizens.

This study aims to explore how social media contributes to the formation of global cultural identity, with a focus on the experiences of users from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is expected to reveal how individuals negotiate global and local cultural elements through their online interactions. The research seeks to contribute to the broader academic discourse on media, identity, and education in the digital age.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the role of social media in the formation of global cultural identity. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations related to their engagement with social media and its influence on their cultural identity. A phenomenological method was used to capture the essence of lived experiences of individuals navigating cultural identity within digital environments (Magis-Weinberg, 2021).

The population of this study consisted of active social media users aged between 18 and 30 years, representing various cultural backgrounds. This age group was selected due to their high level of digital engagement and their position within a critical phase of identity development. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 participants from different countries and cultural regions, ensuring diversity in cultural perspectives and digital behavior. The selection criteria included frequent use of at least two major social media platforms and a willingness to participate in reflective discussions about cultural identity.

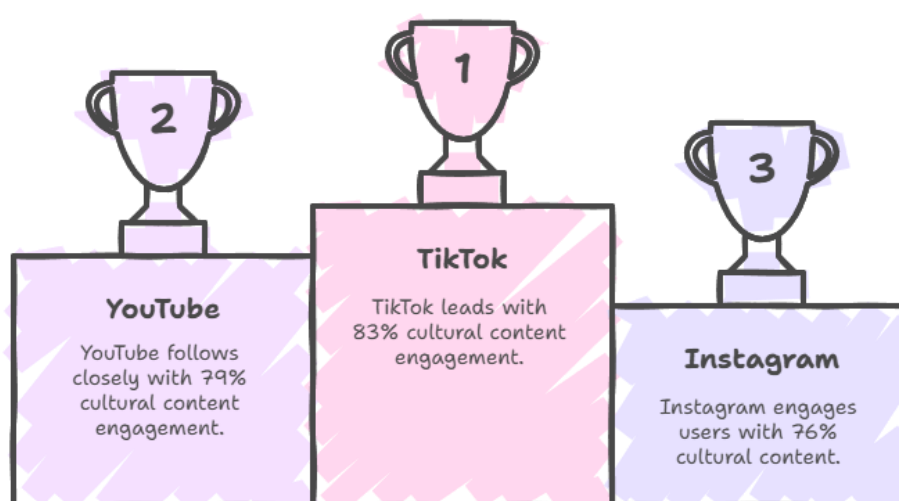
Data collection instruments included semi-structured interview guides and digital activity logs. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' views on cultural identity, their interaction with global cultural content, and their interpretation of cultural expressions encountered on social media (Young, 2024). Participants were also asked to reflect on specific online experiences that they believed influenced their sense of cultural identity. Digital activity logs provided supplemental data on the types of content participants engaged with and shared over a one-week period (Jeon, 2021).

Data collection procedures involved two stages: initial in-depth interviews and follow-up digital reflections. Interviews were conducted virtually through video conferencing platforms and recorded with participants' consent. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes. Participants then submitted reflective digital journals detailing their social media use over the course of one

week. Data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and variations in participants' cultural identity narratives influenced by their online interactions..

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collected in this study reveals patterns of social media usage among 30 participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. Based on the descriptive statistics, platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok dominated daily usage, with users spending an average of 95 to 100 minutes per day. In terms of cultural content engagement, TikTok had the highest percentage at 83%, followed closely by YouTube at 79% and Instagram at 76%. These platforms served as primary sources of exposure to global cultural narratives.



**Figure 1.** Cultural Content Engagement on Social Media

A notable trend emerged showing that the more visually engaging and algorithm-driven a platform was, the higher the level of cultural content interaction. Facebook and Twitter, while still used, demonstrated lower daily engagement and significantly less interaction with cultural content, with 52% and 47% respectively. This suggests a shift in user preference toward platforms that emphasize short-form, interactive media for cultural consumption and expression.

The explanation of this data highlights the strong relationship between social media usage and the type of content consumed. Participants reported encountering diverse cultural trends, including fashion, language expressions, music, and social values, primarily through TikTok and Instagram. Many of them indicated that such platforms introduced them to new cultural practices and shaped their views about other cultures.

Participants also shared that regular exposure to global content influenced their behavior, including their dress style, digital language use (e.g., slang, emojis), and even worldview. The influence was especially strong among users who followed international influencers or participated in global challenges and trends. This continuous interaction played a role in shaping their hybrid cultural identity.

Inferential statistical analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between cultural content engagement and identity formation. The correlation coefficient between cultural engagement and global identity perception was found to be 0.72, with a significance level of 0.001. A similar positive relationship was noted between identity formation and platform interaction, with a coefficient of 0.68 and a p-value of 0.004.

These findings confirm that there is a statistically significant and positive correlation between the frequency of engaging with global cultural content and the development of a global cultural identity. Participants who engaged more frequently with such content reported stronger identification with global values and norms. The strength of the correlation underscores the importance of social media as a cultural agent.

Further analysis of qualitative responses showed a relational pattern between the types of platforms used and the depth of cultural identity formation. Users who actively participated in content creation, rather than passive consumption, showed higher levels of cultural adaptability and openness. This suggests that the interactive nature of social media plays a crucial role in identity negotiation.

Users who engaged in commenting, content remixing, or participating in international trends expressed a stronger sense of being part of a global digital community. In contrast, passive users, despite exposure, did not express the same level of identification with global cultural narratives. Thus, user engagement level serves as a mediating factor in the formation of global identity.

A closer look at individual case studies provides further insight. One participant from Indonesia shared how following Korean and Western content creators influenced her daily routines, fashion choices, and career aspirations. She expressed feeling more connected to a global community, even adopting phrases and mannerisms from the cultures she consumed online.

Another participant from Nigeria described using social media to share local traditions while engaging with global trends. This duality, he explained, allowed him to maintain his cultural roots while being part of global conversations. His digital content combined traditional attire with contemporary music and visual storytelling, symbolizing a hybrid cultural identity.

The explanation of these cases suggests that social media functions not just as a tool for cultural consumption, but also for cultural production and reinterpretation. Users do not merely adopt global cultural elements but reframe them in ways that reflect their unique cultural backgrounds. This process enables the emergence of dynamic, personalized cultural identities.

Participants highlighted that their online identities often differ from their offline cultural expressions. This divergence is influenced by the desire to align with global norms while retaining a sense of cultural authenticity. Such behavior illustrates the complex, negotiated nature of identity in digital environments.

In summary, the findings suggest that social media plays a dual role in both globalizing and localizing cultural identities. The integration of global content into local contexts leads to hybrid forms of identity that are continuously shaped by digital interactions. These identities are flexible, context-dependent, and often reflect a blend of global aspirations and local values.

The findings of this study demonstrate that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping global cultural identity among young users. Participants frequently interacted with cultural content through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, which influenced their behaviors, values, and self-perceptions. A positive correlation was found between cultural engagement on social media and the formation of global identity, with interactive users reporting stronger identification with global norms. Case studies further illustrated the emergence of hybrid cultural identities, blending global trends with local traditions.

The research results signal a shift in how cultural identity is conceptualized and experienced in the digital age. Cultural identity is no longer confined to geographical or ethnic boundaries but is increasingly shaped by digital participation and exposure. This signifies a growing detachment from traditional identity markers and a movement toward more fluid, self-curated identities. Such transformations indicate that digital spaces are becoming new cultural territories where identity is continuously negotiated.

The implications of this research are particularly relevant for educators, policymakers, and media practitioners. In the educational context, there is a need to incorporate discussions on digital identity and media literacy into curricula (Shazly, 2024). Learners must be equipped to critically engage with global content while maintaining cultural awareness. For policymakers, the findings highlight the importance of protecting cultural diversity in the face of global media influences. Media practitioners are encouraged to consider cultural representation and inclusivity in their content strategies (Delfanti, 2019).

The results occurred due to the algorithmic nature of social media platforms, which personalize content based on user interests and behaviors (Jeon, 2021). Users are consistently exposed to content that aligns with or challenges their cultural frameworks, leading to continuous cultural negotiation. The participatory culture of social media, where users can create and remix content, further accelerates identity transformation. Peer influence, viral trends, and global challenges also play a significant role in shaping users' cultural expressions (Rozeňnal, 2022).

Participants' engagement with social media is driven by the need for self-expression, connection, and relevance within a global digital community (Lamorinas, 2025). This motivation encourages users to adopt and adapt global cultural elements into their personal narratives. Emotional resonance with certain global content, such as music or visual storytelling, reinforces this behavior (Yoon, 2023). The fluidity of online platforms supports experimentation with identity, making them ideal spaces for cultural exploration.

The findings call for immediate attention to how identity is taught and understood in educational settings. Educators must recognize that students arrive in classrooms with digitally shaped identities that influence how they perceive the world and themselves (Rossette-Crake, 2022). Institutions need to foster environments where global cultural awareness is balanced with critical reflection and cultural preservation (Lamorinas, 2025). There is a pressing need for interdisciplinary collaboration to address identity formation holistically.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of digital identity on social behavior and educational outcomes. Studies can also investigate how different cultural communities resist or reinterpret dominant global narratives online. Exploring generational differences in digital identity construction may reveal how deeply embedded social media is in shaping cultural perceptions. Such directions will deepen our understanding of identity in the context of ongoing digital globalization.

## CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is the identification of a dual process in identity formation through social media, where users simultaneously experience cultural homogenization and develop hybrid identities. This duality emerges from users' active engagement with global content while maintaining and reinterpreting their local cultural values. The research reveals that identity construction in digital spaces is not passive but involves selective adaptation, negotiation, and reinterpretation of cultural narratives encountered online.

This study contributes to the field of educational and cultural research by offering a conceptual perspective on digital identity that integrates global cultural engagement with individual

agency. The use of a phenomenological qualitative method, combined with digital activity logs, provides a nuanced understanding of how identity is shaped in virtual environments. The integration of user experience and behavioral data presents a methodological innovation that can be replicated in future interdisciplinary studies involving media, education, and culture.

The research is limited by its relatively small sample size and its focus on users aged 18 to 30, which may not fully represent generational or demographic variations in digital identity construction. Future research should expand to include other age groups and cultural communities, particularly those in underrepresented regions. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to observe how digital identity evolves over time and how educational interventions can support critical engagement with global media content.

### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

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