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Cultural Transformation and Social Identity in the Digital Age

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ABSTRAK

The transformation of culture and social identity in the digital age is becoming an increasingly complex phenomenon along with the development of information and Communication Technology. This study aims to understand how digital media affects the construction of social identity and cultural change in society. Using a qualitative approach, this study adopts the methods of digital ethnography, discourse analysis, and case studies to explore the experiences of individuals and communities in the digital space. The results showed that social identity becomes more flexible and can be reconstructed through interactions on social media. In addition, the phenomenon of glocalization occurs, in which the local culture adapts to the global culture in digital format. However, challenges such as cultural homogenization, filter bubbles and digital Identity Security also arise in this process. In conclusion, digital media not only accelerates cultural transformation but also creates new dynamics in the formation of social identity. Further studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of this phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

Digitization has become an indispensable part of the life of modern man, transforming various aspects of social, economic and cultural interaction. Advances in technology, especially the internet and social media, have created digital spaces that allow individuals and communities to interact without geographical boundaries. In this era, social and cultural identity is no longer formed only through the physical environment, but also through an increasingly complex virtual world. Digitalization has a positive impact by expanding access to information and strengthening social relationships. However, on the other hand, these changes also present challenges, such as shifting cultural values, identity homogenization, as well as conflicts between digital identity and real identity.

Social identity is a concept that develops based on the interaction of the individual with his environment. In the digital age, this identity is no longer formed exclusively through physical interaction, but also through digital media such as social media



platforms, online forums and virtual communities. The concept of self-presentation proposed by Goffman (1959) is increasingly relevant in the digital age, where individuals can control how they want to be recognized by others in the virtual world. Younger generations, who grew up in a digital environment, are often more affected by global culture than their own local culture. This gave rise to the phenomenon of "hybrid identity," in which a person can adopt values and lifestyles from a variety of different cultures through digital media.

The cultural transformation due to digitization is inevitable. The intensifying global interaction through the internet creates the phenomenon of cultural hybridization, that is, the mixing of cultural elements from different countries that give birth to a new identity. On the one hand, this enriches cultural diversity and allows for more flexible adaptation to changing times. However, on the other hand, local cultures often face pressure from dominant cultures that are more exposed through digital media. For example, popular cultural trends from developed countries, such as the United States and South Korea, are more easily accessible and adopted by people in different parts of the world, threatening the existence of traditional cultures that have more limited exposure. Despite presenting challenges, digitization also brings benefits to social and cultural identity. First, digital technology increases access to cultural and historical information through various platforms, such as digital archives, virtual museums, and online educational content. Second, digitization allows individuals, especially minority groups, to express their identity more freely without physical or social restrictions. Third, innovations in technology, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), open up new opportunities in cultural preservation. The technology can be used to revive endangered cultures or facilitate interactive learning about local history and traditions.

Behind its numerous benefits, digitization also carries risks to social and cultural identity. One of the main challenges is cultural homogenization, where local cultures are increasingly excluded due to the dominance of more popular global cultures. In addition, the phenomenon of discrepancy between digital identity and real identity arises, which can lead to internal conflicts for the individual. Many people are building personas online that are different from their real lives, giving rise to identity dissonance. In addition, the rapid spread of information in the digital world also increases the risk of misinformation and cultural bias, which can reinforce stereotypes as well as mislead perceptions about a particular culture.

The digital age has profoundly transformed cultural identity formation and expression. Social media and the internet have become central to shaping fluid, multifaceted cultural identities that transcend geographical boundaries (Figueiredo et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2024). This sociovirtualization phenomenon enables greater democratization of cultural discourse and promotes intercultural communication (Kurt, 2024). Digital platforms allow individuals and communities to share traditions and negotiate which aspects of their culture to emphasize (Figueiredo et al., 2024). However, challenges arise, including cultural homogenization, appropriation, and the reinforcement of stereotypes (Figueiredo et al., 2024; Kurt, 2024). The digital era has also altered communication patterns, with emojis and abbreviations becoming integral to digital language (Anista, 2023). While offering opportunities for global connectivity and cultural expression, these changes pose risks to traditional values and blur the lines between private and public life (Anista, 2023; Putri et al., 2024). Understanding these transformations is crucial for navigating the evolving cultural landscape in the digital age.

With digitalization growing, it is important to understand how this transformation affects social and cultural identity. Several studies have addressed the impact of digitization on social interaction, but there are still research gaps in understanding how digitization affects the balance between local and global cultures. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of digitalization on social and cultural identity based on existing literature. By understanding these dynamics, it is hoped that this study can provide a deeper insight into how societies can adapt to these changes without losing their cultural identity.

LITERATURE

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory was first introduced by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. This theory explains how individuals define themselves based on membership in a social group. According to this theory, a person's social identity is formed through three main processes: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. First, social categorization occurs when individuals automatically group themselves and others into specific social categories, such as based on ethnicity, religion, profession, or digital preferences. Second, social identification is when individuals begin to adopt the norms and values that prevail within their group, thus influencing their way of thinking and acting. Thirdly, social comparison occurs when individuals compare their group with other groups, which often leads to the appearance of stereotypes or even conflicts between groups.

In the digital age, this theory has become especially relevant because social media allows individuals to build more complex social identities. Social identity is now formed not only in the real world, but also in the digital space, where individuals can interact with various groups, both locally and globally. For example, on platforms such as Twitter and Reddit, individuals can join specific communities that reinforce their identity, be it as pop culture fans, social activists, or members of the academic community. However, this also poses new challenges, such as identity fragmentation and the formation of filter bubbles, in which individuals are exposed only to perspectives that support the views of their own group.

Digital Culture Theory

Digital Culture theory examines how digital technologies affect the way individuals interact, communicate, and build meaning in their social lives. This theory emphasizes that culture in the digital age is not only formed through direct interaction, but also through constantly evolving digital media. According to Henry Jenkins in his book Convergence Culture (2006), digital culture is the result of media convergence, where various forms of communication such as text, images, video, and sound mix together in a digital space. Jenkins highlights how individuals are now not only passive consumers, but also active content producers (prosumers), who create and spread culture through digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. In addition, digital Culture theory also raises the concept of virtual communities, where individuals can build relationships and cultural identities without geographical restrictions. Digital culture allows for the emergence of new phenomena such as meme culture, viral culture, and fluid digital identities, where a person can display different personas across different digital platforms. However, digital Culture also presents challenges such as digital privacy, technology access inequality, and algorithm dominance that can limit individual exposure to more diverse cultural perspectives.

In the context of social identity, digital culture theory shows how digital media can amplify or change the way individuals understand themselves and their groups. For example, social media can accelerate the spread of local culture to the global level, but on the other hand it can also cause the erosion of traditional culture due to the dominance of global digital Culture. Therefore, an understanding of this theory becomes very important in analyzing how digitization shapes social and cultural identity in the modern era.

Cultural Mediation Theory

The Theory of cultural mediation developed by John B. Thompson (1995) emphasizes how mass media and communication technology play a role in shaping social experience as well as the construction of meaning in society. Thompson argues that the media is not only a means of conveying information, but also an actor in the process of cultural mediation that influences how individuals and groups perceive the world.

In this perspective, digitization and social media further accelerate the process of cultural mediation. The content spread through digital platforms not only reflects culture, but also transforms it through interaction and reinterpretation by a global audience. This phenomenon can be seen in how local cultures are adapted and commodified for international audiences through social media and streaming platforms. Thompson also highlighted that in the digital age, individuals have more access to participate in the production and distribution of culture, thus creating more diverse forms of expression. However, The Theory of cultural mediation also underlines the existence of inequalities in media access and production. Control over the media is still held by large entities such as global technology companies, which can determine the dominant cultural discourse. In addition, digital media algorithms can shape individuals 'cultural experiences in ways that are not necessarily neutral, reinforcing certain biases and preferences in media consumption.

Social Network Theory

The social network theory developed by Manuel Castells in his book The Rise of the Network Society (1996) describes how the digital age has created a network-based Society (network society). According to Castells, in modern society, social relationships are increasingly occurring through digital networks that transcend traditional geographic and structural boundaries.

One of the key concepts in this theory is that power in the digital age no longer depends on hierarchical institutions, but on positions in networks. Individuals or organizations that have broader access to information and technology will have an advantage in influencing social opinion and policy. In this context, social media serves as the main infrastructure that allows individuals to form identities, participate in social movements, and spread ideologies. Castells also highlighted how digitalization has changed the dynamics of power in society. With networked power, groups that previously had no access to public spaces can now build communities and fight for their interests through digital media. Phenomena such as the Arab Spring and social media-based social movements are examples of how digital networks are becoming tools for social change. However, Castells also cautioned that these social networks could be exploited by actors with specific interests, including technology companies and governments, to control information and public opinion. Overall, social network theory provides a perspective that digitization not only has an impact on communication, but also on the social structure as a whole. Social and cultural identity in the digital age is no longer something static, but continues to evolve in a constantly changing network dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses literature review approach to analyze the impact of digitalization on social and cultural identity. Literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to synthesize various previous studies to find patterns, trends, and gaps in studies that have been conducted. The main objective of this study is to understand how digitalization affects individual and cultural identity in various social contexts based on credible academic sources. In the process, the study not only summarizes but also critically analyzes the results of previously published studies.

The Data in this study were sourced from various scientific journals, academic books, conference articles, and Research reports obtained through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and ResearchGate. In order for the research results to remain relevant to the latest digitization developments, the literature used is limited to publications within the last 5 to 10 years. Selected articles should specifically address the relationship between digitization and social and cultural identity. Studies that only touch on this topic in general without in-depth analysis will be excluded. In addition, only articles that are available in English and Indonesian and have full access will be used to ensure the validity and credibility of the information. Articles that do not pass the peer review process, have an inappropriate methodology, or come from noncredible sources will also be excluded from the analysis.

The literature search strategy is carried out using relevant keywords, such as "Digitalization and Social Identity", "Digital Culture and Identity", and "Impact of Digitalization on Social Identity and Culture". In addition, articles with DOI (Digital Object Identifier) are prioritized to ensure the validity of the source. The snowballing technique is also applied, that is, by tracing the references used in the articles that have been found to obtain additional sources that support further analysis. This approach allows for a wider and more in-depth coverage of the literature.

The analysis in this study was conducted using a thematic approach (thematic analysis), where the literature is grouped based on the main themes that emerge from various previous studies. Some of the main themes studied include: (1) the influence of digitization on social identity, (2) cultural transformation due to digitization, and (3) the impact of social media in the formation of individual and group identities. In addition, this study also adopted a literature synthesis approach by comparing various research findings to find similarities, differences, and gaps in previous studies. Relevant theories, such as social identity theory and Digital Culture Theory, are used as a conceptual framework in understanding the phenomenon under study. To ensure the validity and credibility of the data, this study only used literature that has passed the peer review process in reputable journals. In addition, each finding is analyzed from a variety of sources to avoid bias and ensure the objectivity of the results of the study. Sources that have potential bias or contain subjective opinions without empirical support were not used in the study. With this approach, the research is expected to provide a more accurate and in-depth insight into the influence of digitization on social and cultural identity. As a literature review-based study, this study has some limitations. First, the study did not include empirical studies or primary data collection, since the entire analysis was based on secondary data from the literature that has already been published. Second, this study does not focus on a specific population, but rather addresses the impact of digitization more broadly in a global context. Third, studies conducted before the digital age were not included in the analysis, as the purpose of this study was to understand the changes in social and cultural identity due to digitization that have occurred in recent decades.

This study uses a Meta-analysis approach, following PRISMA guidelines, to systematically evaluate the impact of digitization on social identity and cultural transformation. An initial search identified 239 academic journals and conference proceedings, but after applying strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, only 25 studies were selected for final analysis. The study also used PRISMA flowcharts, which offer a visual representation of the literature selection process, ensuring transparency and replicability in the research methodology.

Table 1. Kriteria Inklusi untuk Peninjauan Literatur

Category	Inclusion Criteria		
Publication type	Scientific articles published in		
	https://scholar.google.com		
Journal	Top international journals and national journals for the		
specifications	last 10 years		
Journal index	Google Scholar, SINTA 1-6, Scopus Q1-NonQ,		
	GARUDA, Crossref, and ICI		
Publication Year	2015-2024		
Research country	Indonesian and Foreign		
Variable	Digitization and its impact on social and cultural		
	identity, including aspects of social media, cultural		
	globalization, and digital representation.		
Field	Social, communication, culture, digital media, sociology, and psychology related to digitization, social identity,		
	and culture.		
Type of study	Theoretical and empirical		
Keywords	Digitalization, Social Identity, Cultural Identity, Media		
	and Society, Social Media Influence, Globalization and		
	Culture		
Subject	This study falls within the Humanities, specifically in the		
	fields of Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities, Media		
	and Communication Studies, and Anthropology. It		
	explores how digitalization reshapes social identity and		
	cultural transformation through technological		
	mediation.		

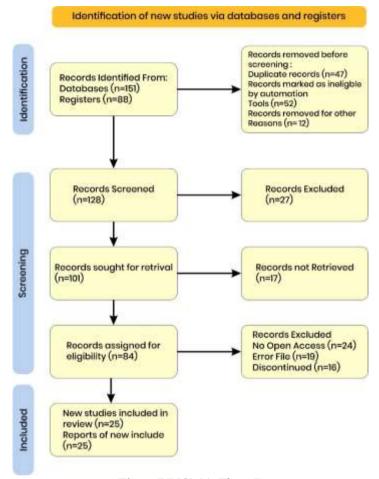


Fig 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through a comprehensive literature review using the systematic literature review (SLR) method guided by the PRISMA framework, a total of 239 articles were drawn from various sources such as Google Scholar, Scopus, SINTA, GARUDA, Crossref, and ICI. Following a rigorous selection process based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, only 25 articles met the requirements for in-depth examination.

The selected articles represent diverse studies conducted in various countries, including Indonesia, published between 2018 and 2024. These studies mainly explore the impact of digitalization on social identity and cultural transformation in various societal contexts.

The analysis revealed the following findings:

- 1. Digital platforms play an important role in shaping and reconstructing social identity, allowing individuals to express, modify and negotiate their cultural affiliation in a dynamic way.
- 2. The interaction between local and global cultures through digital media encourages cultural hybridization, which leads to the enrichment and potential homogenization of cultural practices.
- 3. The effectiveness of digital platforms in preserving and promoting cultural heritage depends on key factors such as technological accessibility, digital literacy, and the role of government and institutional support.

4. Despite the benefits, challenges such as digital inequalities, algorithm-driven biases, and cultural misrepresentation persist, posing barriers to an inclusive and diverse digital cultural landscape.

PRISMA flowcharts have been included to provide a clear visual representation of the literature selection process, outlining the stages of study identification, screening, feasibility assessment, and final inclusion.

The results of this study indicate that the transformation of culture and social identity in the digital age is strongly influenced by the dynamics of interaction in the digital space. To understand this phenomenon more deeply, the findings can be interpreted through several major relevant theories.

Table 1. Analysis of findings in the context of theory

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Teori	Interpretation Of Findings
Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner)	An individual's social identity in the digital space is formed through membership in online communities, such as social media groups, discussion forums, and digital fandoms. Individuals negotiate their identity in a way that conforms to the norms and values of the digital community to which they belong. In addition, the phenomenon of self-presentation on social media shows how individuals actively construct their identities based on interactions and recognition from social groups in cyberspace.
Theory Of Cultural Mediation (Thompson)	Digital Media acts as a bridge between local and global cultures, enabling the exchange of cultural values, traditions, and symbols. In this study, it was found that local cultures not only survive, but also undergo adaptation and reinterpretation in the digital ecosystem. For example, diaspora communities use social media to defend their culture of origin, while global popular culture also adopts elements of local culture through the phenomenon of glocalization.
Social Network Theory (Castells)	Social identity and cultural transformation in the digital age develop in the context of decentralized social networks. Interaction in digital networks accelerates the spread of ideas, cultural trends and the construction of new identities. The study shows that digital social networks allow individuals to create more flexible and diverse identities, depending on the platforms they use and the groups they join. Social media algorithms also play a role in shaping digital environments that can reinforce certain identities through the phenomenon of filter bubbles and echo chambers.

Source: theories that have been developed by experts

The results of this study show that individuals in the digital age shape and negotiate their identity through social interaction in the digital space. Tajfel & Turner's social identity theory perspective helps understand how individuals identify themselves as part of a particular group on social media, online forums, or other digital communities.

This identity is not only formed by membership in a group, but also through a process of differentiation from other groups. For example, fandom or digital activist communities often develop a collective identity by establishing their distinctive norms, values, and symbols that set them apart from other communities. In addition, the results show that individuals can actively construct and present their identity on social media through self-presentation mechanisms, such as choosing published content and adapting it to the social expectations of their digital audience.

In the context of Thompson's cultural mediation theory, the study found that digital media acts as a bridge between local and global cultures. The digitization process allows local cultures not only to survive, but also to adapt to global culture through the process of glocalization, that is, the merging of global elements with the local context. For example, many creators from different countries are taking advantage of digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to showcase their traditional culture in a format that appeals to a global audience. This shows that while globalization can lead to cultural homogenization, digital media also opens up opportunities for local cultures to gain wider exposure. In this study, it was found that diaspora communities utilize digital media to stay connected to their culture of origin, such as by sharing language, traditions, and social practices through online groups and community-based platforms.

Castells 'social network theory provides insights into how social identity and cultural transformation evolve in increasingly complex and decentralized digital networks. In the digital age, individuals are no longer bound to geographical boundaries in building their social networks, but can interact with various cross-cultural communities and countries through digital platforms. This research shows that this phenomenon allows individuals to have a more flexible and dynamic identity, depending on the context of the social network in which they participate. However, the study also revealed that social media algorithms have a role to play in shaping digital ecosystems where individuals tend to be exposed to perspectives aligned with their previous views, through the phenomena of filter bubbles and echo chambers. This can strengthen the identity of a particular group, but also potentially limit openness to different perspectives. By linking the findings of this study with the above theories, it can be concluded that social and cultural identity in the digital age is a constantly evolving process, influenced by social interaction in the digital space, the role of the media as cultural intermediaries, as well as the dynamics of digital social networks. Individuals have more control in shaping and displaying their identity, but at the same time, they are also influenced by digital media algorithms that direct their patterns of interaction and information consumption.

The results of this study confirm that the transformation of culture and social identity in the digital age is not only a technological phenomenon, but also a complex social change. Digital Media has changed the way individuals form, negotiate, and present their identities. In the context of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner), this study found that individuals are increasingly aware of their membership in digital-based social groups, whether through social media, online communities, or discussion forums. However, in contrast to conventional social groups, membership in digital communities is more fluid, allowing individuals to adopt multiple identities within different platforms. This shows that social identity in the digital era is more flexible and dynamic than traditional community-based identity.

Not only that, the results also strengthen the theory of cultural mediation (Thompson), where digital media become intermediaries in connecting local and global cultures. The phenomenon of glocalization is increasingly seen in digital cultural

practices, where individuals and communities adopt global cultural elements but retain local cultural elements in their digital expression. For example, content creators use the language, traditions or aesthetics typical of their region in a more universal format to reach a global audience. However, the main challenge that arises is how individuals and communities can maintain their cultural authenticity amid the increasingly dominant flow of digital globalization.

In the perspective of Social Network Theory (Castells), this study reveals that social identity is not only formed through direct interaction, but also influenced by increasingly fragmented digital network patterns. Social media algorithms play an important role in shaping the interaction and exposure of individuals to various cultural and social discourses. The phenomenon of filter bubbles and echo chambers is a major challenge in the formation of digital identity, as individuals tend to be exposed only to perspectives aligned with their previous beliefs. This has the potential to strengthen social segregation and reduce openness to cultural differences and diverse identities. Furthermore, the study also found that digitization brings challenges related to identity security and self-representation in cyberspace. Individuals not only face the dilemma of presenting their identity authentically, but must also face the potential for algorithmic manipulation and exploitation of personal data. This suggests that although the digital world provides a wider scope for the expression of social identity, individuals still have to face the risks that arise from digital ecosystems controlled by technology and commercial interests.

Thus, the results of this study enrich the understanding of how social and cultural identity develops in the digital age. Although digital media open up new opportunities for cultural expression and identity formation, individuals must also face challenges related to algorithmic control, local cultural sustainability and digital security. Therefore, a critical approach in understanding the impact of digitization on culture and social identity is becoming increasingly important in subsequent research.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the transformation of culture and social identity in the digital age is a dynamic and complex process, influenced by interaction in the digital space, cultural mediation by the media, as well as the structure of digital social networks. Digital Media is not only a means of communication, but also plays an important role in shaping and negotiating the identity of individuals and social groups. Identities that were previously fixed and locally based are now more flexible and can be reconstructed across multiple digital platforms. In a cultural context, digital media has created new spaces for the exchange of values, traditions and cultural expressions. The phenomenon of globalization allows local cultures to survive and even thrive in the digital ecosystem, while digital globalization also introduces new cultures that can affect the way individuals understand their identity. Online communities, such as diasporas or certain interest-based groups, use digital media to maintain and adapt their identities in a changing environment. However, the study also highlights emerging challenges, such as the homogenization of cultures due to global cultural dominance, the influence of algorithms in forming filter bubbles and echo chambers, and the security of digital identities that are increasingly becoming a concern. Although individuals have more control in displaying their identity in cyberspace, they are also influenced by digital social structures that shape patterns of interaction and consumption of information. Thus, this study confirms that digitization not only brings

about changes in the way individuals interact with their culture and social identity, but also creates opportunities as well as challenges that need to be critically understood. Further studies are needed to explore the long-term impact of cultural transformation and social identity in an ever-evolving digital ecosystem.

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