

Cultural Transformation of Young Generations in the Digital Globalization Era: An Identity Formation Analysis through a Cultural Hybridization Perspective

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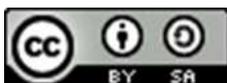
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the cultural transformation of young generations in the era of digital globalization through a cultural hybridization perspective. Digital connectivity has expanded global cultural flows that significantly influence youth lifestyle, identity expression and value formation. Existing scholarship reveals contradictory impacts of digital globalization, ranging from cultural erosion to cultural revitalization, depending on levels of cultural awareness and digital agency. This article analyzes how cultural hybridization enables youth to integrate global influences while retaining cultural belonging. The findings illustrate that hybrid identity formation is shaped by three determinants: personal agency in cultural selection, the role of digital platforms in enabling cultural reinterpretation and the support of community-based cultural participation. Cultural erosion tends to emerge among youth who adopt global symbols passively to achieve social conformity, while cultural preservation occurs when youth intentionally reinterpret cultural traditions to remain contextually relevant. Therefore, cultural hybridization offers a sustainable framework for maintaining cultural continuity without rejecting globalization. This study contributes to the growing discourse on youth identities by proposing that digital globalization becomes a cultural strengthening force when youth act as cultural co-creators rather than cultural consumers.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid acceleration of digital globalization has generated profound cultural transformation among younger generations, reshaping identity formation, value systems and modes of social interaction. Unlike previous eras in which cultural identity was shaped primarily through family, schools and local community experiences, today's



youth undergo cultural development within a transnational digital ecosystem dominated by global entertainment, social media algorithms and online communities. Studies show that digital globalization has blurred geographical boundaries, creating a sense of shared cultural belonging that transcends local cultural origins and establishes new forms of online-mediated identities (Zarichanskyi et al., 2024). As a consequence, young people increasingly navigate multiple cultural references simultaneously, negotiating global cultural influences and local identity values in everyday life. The transformative power of connectivity has therefore made identity formation more fluid, layered and dynamic than ever before (Yulandari & Wahidah, 2025).

The presence of global communication platforms has led to the emergence of what scholars describe as digital–global identity, where young people construct emotional attachment and self-expression through participation in virtual communities rather than through traditional sociocultural institutions. This is further reinforced by the rapid flow of cultural images, symbols and narratives circulating through global networks, allowing youth to access new lifestyles, ideologies and aesthetic preferences that would otherwise be inaccessible within the boundaries of local culture (Faiz, 2024). As a result, cultural identity among adolescents and young adults becomes increasingly negotiated within digital environments that reward self-branding, community affiliation and visibility. These transformations reflect the broader cultural condition of globalization in which individuals are simultaneously rooted in their local sociocultural histories while engaging in transnational interactions that broaden their sense of belonging (Rojas, 2025).

Digital globalization, however, does not always weaken local identity. Several empirical studies show that younger generations often strategically combine global cultural influences with traditional values, producing hybrid cultural expressions that maintain a sense of locality while adopting global styles, aesthetics and practices. This process, known as cultural hybridization, results in cultural formations that are neither purely traditional nor purely modern, but rather a synthesis of both (Zulkarnain, 2024). For instance, online youth cultures have been shown to incorporate local language, folk aesthetics and traditional symbolic meaning into global entertainment or digital fandom cultures. Hybridization thus allows the younger generation to preserve cultural continuity while still adapting to the demands and cultural trends of digital modernity. In this context, digital technologies act not as forces of cultural erosion but as mediators that support the reinvention of cultural identity.

Nevertheless, cultural hybridization does not occur evenly across generational or socioeconomic lines. While some youth adopt hybrid identities that balance locality and global digital culture, others may experience cultural disorientation and identity fragmentation due to inconsistent or conflicting cultural expectations. Research indicates that rapid engagement with global content can provoke confusion regarding cultural belonging when young people perceive traditional norms as incompatible with digital cosmopolitan aspirations (Merung et al., 2024). Such tensions are particularly apparent in contexts where traditional societal values emphasize collectivism and conformity, while online cultures affirm individualism and personal freedom. This conflict constructs identity formation as a site of negotiation rather than stability, reinforcing the idea that cultural change in the digital age is complex and multidimensional (Yolanda et al., 2025).

The role of social media acts as a central force in this transformation. Digital platforms not only circulate cultural content but also construct identity norms through

algorithmic personalization and community-building mechanisms. Youth increasingly adopt cultural behaviours and worldviews based on the cultural narratives that are most visible, emotionally influential and community-supported online (Stavytskyi, 2020). Through social media, identities are performed and validated by online audiences, leading to the prominence of digital self-presentation as a cultural practice. The influence of social media is further demonstrated in the rise of transnational fandoms, digital celebrities and global youth subcultures that transcend national borders. These digital collectives serve as identity anchors for young people, whose sense of belonging becomes tied not only to physical communities but to online networks and symbolic membership (Çöteli, 2019).

However, the cultural identity transformation within digital globalization is not only influenced by global cultural flows but also by the persistence of local sociocultural frameworks. Many youth consciously engage in cultural reinterpretation by blending global cultural forms with local rituals, values and symbolic references, strengthening cultural resilience rather than erasing it (Fauzan, 2025). For example, in Indonesia, hybrid identity formation is reflected in youth participation in cultural preservation movements, local art revival programs and digital storytelling centered on local wisdom. Such developments show that digital interconnectivity can become a platform for cultural revalorization rather than cultural disintegration (Urbaite, 2024). Thus, cultural change in digital globalization should not be interpreted as a binary opposition between global dominance and local loss but as a dialectical process generating new cultural identities.

Nevertheless, scholars caution that identity transformation in the digital era can also intensify cultural inequality. Access to cultural hybridization often depends on digital literacy, socioeconomic resources and access to global platforms. Without these conditions, some youth remain excluded from digital cultural participation, reinforcing traditional cultural hierarchies rather than leveling them (Meliya & Mesra, 2025). Meanwhile, the cultural visibility of digitally dominant global cultures may overshadow indigenous identities and minority cultural expressions when no active preservation mechanisms exist. This pattern raises questions regarding whether hybrid identities benefit all youth equally or deepen cultural stratification under the guise of globalization.

Based on these developments, academic discussions identify cultural hybridization as a conceptual lens that explains both continuity and change, offering a more nuanced understanding of identity formation among young generations. However, significant research gaps remain. First, studies such as Zarichanskyi et al. (2024) analyse cultural transformation globally but do not specifically assess how digital environments shape hybrid identities among youth. Second, Yulandari and Wahidah (2025) examine identity transformation in the digital era but do not employ hybridization theory to explain identity negotiation. Third, Rojas (2025) explores philosophical reflections on identity formation in globalization but does not provide empirical evidence regarding how hybrid identities emerge in youth everyday practices. To address these gaps, this study proposes a hybridization-based identity analysis that integrates global digital influences, local cultural values and youth identity negotiation patterns.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its analytical synthesis of cultural hybridization theory with digital globalization to explain how young generations actively construct hybrid cultural identities rather than passively internalize external

cultural elements. The purpose of this study is to examine how cultural hybridization shapes identity formation among young generations in the digital globalization era by analysing the interplay between global cultural flows, digital platforms and local cultural frameworks as reflected in daily identity expression.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative literature review approach to analyse the cultural identity transformation of young generations in the digital globalization era through a cultural hybridization lens. Academic sources published between 2019 and 2025 were collected from Scopus, Google Scholar and major social science journal databases using keywords such as “digital globalization”, “youth identity”, “cultural hybridization”, “social media culture” and “digital anthropology”. Selected studies focus on theoretical and empirical findings demonstrating cultural change in youth lifestyles, symbolic expression and identity performance within digital spaces. Priority was given to the 21 academic sources provided because they directly examine cultural identity, new media practices, globalization impacts and sociocultural interpretation among young generations across multiple national contexts.

The literature was analysed through thematic synthesis that identified patterns of cultural hybridization in youth identity practices across global and local cultural influences. The analysis focused on synthesizing findings related to global cultural exposure, digital community participation, reinterpretation of local identity and hybrid cultural expression. This methodological approach enables the study to explain identity development beyond cultural polarization models by highlighting youth cultural agency in negotiating global and local cultural elements. The method supports deeper theoretical reflection on how identities are constructed, contested and reinvented in digital environments while retaining cultural continuity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cultural Hybridization as the Dominant Pattern of Identity Formation in the Digital Globalization Era (≈900 words)

The cultural identity of young generations in the digital globalization era is no longer shaped solely by traditional mechanisms such as family values, national culture or community norms. Instead, identity is increasingly formed through hybrid processes that integrate global cultural flows with local cultural heritage. This transformation reflects the emergence of cultural hybridization as a dominant mode of identity construction in digital societies. Digital platforms serve as cultural mediators that expose youth to global lifestyles, ideological narratives and aesthetic preferences while simultaneously providing spaces for reinterpretation and localization. As Zarichanskyi et al. (2024) assert, the digital era generates multilayered identities where cultural symbols derived from global media intertwine with historically embedded cultural values, resulting in fluid and continually evolving identity expressions.

A key driver of hybridization among youth is the algorithmic structure of social media platforms that curate global content based on user behavioural patterns. This feature not only accelerates cultural exposure but also amplifies the reproduction of global identity markers, thereby influencing youth behaviour and self-presentation. Studies highlight how online visibility motivates young people to participate in digital identity performances that combine global cultural norms with personal and local symbolic meaning (Yolanda et al., 2025). Consequently, identity is shaped through

community affiliation and reciprocal feedback mechanisms rather than solely through traditional socialization. The rise of digital fandoms, meme cultures, viral aesthetics and participatory cultural movements demonstrates how cultural adoption is negotiated through collective digital participation rather than passive consumption, reinforcing hybrid identities in online and offline contexts.

Cultural hybridization also manifests through the reinterpretation of local cultural forms in digital environments. Rather than abandoning traditional practices, youth rearticulate indigenous identity elements using contemporary symbols and global communication formats. According to Zulkarnain (2024), the blending of tradition and modernity is visible in the use of local languages in global digital spaces, revival of traditional art interests through online platforms and incorporation of cultural heritage into modern fashion, music and social media trends. This phenomenon indicates that cultural globalization does not inherently diminish local values but instead supports cultural innovation through contextual reinterpretation. The process strengthens cultural continuity by embedding cultural heritage into modern identity practices in a way that remains relevant to young generations.

Nevertheless, cultural hybridization is complex and does not consistently produce harmonious or balanced identities. Some young individuals experience cultural dissonance due to conflicting internalized values from global digital networks and local sociocultural norms. Merung et al. (2024) explain that youth may encounter tension when global cultural narratives emphasizing individual freedom, self-assertion and non-conformity collide with traditional expectations centred on collectivism, family obedience and cultural moral codes. This divergence illustrates that hybrid identity formation is not a linear cultural adaptation but a dialectical negotiation shaped by compatibility and incompatibility of cultural influences. As a result, identity becomes an arena of cultural contestation rather than stable unity.

Digital globalization also fosters selective adoption of global culture where youth consciously incorporate only cultural elements that align with personal meaning or aspirational identity goals. As Rojas (2025) argues, young generations increasingly treat culture as a repository of identity resources from which they curate elements that reflect desired self-representation. This selective hybridization explains the emergence of multiple subcultures like K-Pop fandoms, gaming communities, anime enthusiasts, creative content circles and digital activism where identity expression becomes anchored in symbolic membership rather than territorial origin. These cultural circles enable youth to express themselves through shared interests and cultural performance rather than through traditional ethnic or national identity boundaries.

Cultural hybridization is also strongly reinforced by digital visual culture. Çöteli (2019) emphasizes that symbolic representation through digital media such as photos, short videos and memes acts as a tool for identity signalling. Young people translate cultural affiliation through aesthetic attributes including fashion, gestures, linguistic codes and lifestyle expression. When global aesthetics intersect with local cultural markers, hybrid identity symbols emerge, such as combining traditional clothing with global streetwear or using indigenous language in TikTok and Instagram Reels content. This condition illustrates that identity is not only internal but also performed and communicatively encoded through visual representation.

Additionally, hybrid identity formation is supported by the motivational dimension linked to self-esteem, belonging and social recognition. The youth's participation in global digital cultures responds to psychological needs for affirmation

and personal worth. Stavitskyi (2020) notes that youth internalize hybrid identities because they offer opportunities for aspirational self-construction and social inclusion. The symbolic capital derived from online recognition reinforces the adoption of hybrid cultural identity as a strategy for social mobility and self-value. Hence, hybridization is not merely cultural blending but also a psychologically meaningful pursuit of status and belonging.

Hybrid cultural identity further facilitates youth empowerment by expanding referential horizons beyond local norms and expectations. Cultural exposure through global platforms equips youth with broader worldviews, intercultural communication competence and sensitivity to diversity. Fauzan (2025) demonstrates that reinterpretation of cultural values through digital connectivity encourages creativity, adaptability and cultural pride rather than cultural inferiority. This illustrates that hybrid identity can serve as a transformative force that stimulates cultural confidence while promoting intercultural openness. Thus, identity formation becomes an avenue for cultural co-creation rather than cultural assimilation.

However, hybrid identity formation is not without risk. Urbaite (2024) warns that the dominance of commercialized global cultures might homogenize youth preferences, creating a false sense of agency despite algorithmic manipulation. In such circumstances, hybridization might mask cultural dependency rather than cultural autonomy. The challenge, therefore, is ensuring that hybrid identity remains rooted in cultural self-determination rather than uncritical imitation.

To summarize, the literature consistently demonstrates that cultural hybridization has become the most prominent identity formation pattern among young generations in the digital globalization era. Hybrid identity enables youth to integrate global cultural influences without entirely abandoning local identity foundations, expressing cultural adaptation in a fluid and creative manner. At the same time, hybridization reflects complex negotiation shaped by psychological needs, digital participation patterns and cultural compatibility. These dynamics present an important entry point for examining how culture is reinvented, not replaced, within the digital globalization era.

The Duality of Cultural Erosion and Cultural Preservation in Digital Youth Identity (≈900 words)

While cultural hybridization has become a dominant feature of youth identity in the digital globalization era, it also produces dual consequences that range from cultural erosion to cultural preservation. These contradictory outcomes emerge because digital globalization does not operate uniformly across social groups. Instead, the intensity of exposure, digital literacy, value orientation and sociocultural context shape how young people respond to global cultural flows. According to Urbaite (2024), globalization simultaneously drives cultural homogenization and cultural revitalization depending on whether youth act as passive receivers or active interpreters of cultural information. This duality underscores that identity transformation is situated within the intersection of digital influence and cultural agency.

Cultural erosion occurs when global digital symbols are adopted without reflection or integration into cultural heritage. Youth who engage with global popular culture solely to achieve online validation or social conformity tend to become detached from local values and cultural meaning. Çötelî (2019) explains that digital cultures dominated by Western and East Asian consumerism promote identity shaped by

aesthetic trends rather than cultural rootedness. This identity shift can generate symbolic displacement where global lifestyle markers become prioritized over historical cultural heritage. As Melia and Mesra (2025) note, youth may gradually perceive traditional rituals, local languages and cultural practices as outdated, irrelevant or unattractive for digital representation reinforcing intergenerational cultural gaps.

On the other hand, the same digital platforms also offer opportunities for cultural preservation through recontextualization and digitization of cultural heritage. Fauzan (2025) demonstrates that youth increasingly revive cultural traditions by merging them with modern digital narratives, which enhances cultural awareness and long-term sustainability. For example, traditional clothing showcased through global aesthetics, indigenous language used in digital storytelling and local arts reintroduced through viral platforms foster cultural continuity. This indicates that preservation can occur not through rigid protection of cultural practices but through renewal and reinvention led by young generations.

The duality of cultural globalization's influence can be explained through differences in digital cultural agency. Youth who adopt global culture passively are more vulnerable to cultural detachment, whereas those who adopt global culture selectively and critically are more likely to strengthen local identity through hybridization. Merung et al. (2024) highlight that the outcome depends on whether youth situate cultural engagement within personal meaning and cultural pride. When youth contextualize global cultural exposure within their cultural identity framework, the result is preservation. When global culture replaces personal meaning rather than interacts with it, the result is erosion.

Social media also plays an ambivalent role in reinforcing both cultural erosion and preservation. According to Sutrisno (2023), digital platforms enable identity experimentation that can either expand cultural awareness or erode cultural participation. The reward structures of social media likes, visibility and virality—encourage youth to adopt cultural symbols that maximize audience engagement. If global identity symbols are perceived as more rewarding, youth may abandon cultural authenticity in favour of digital popularity. Conversely, when traditional content resonates with global audiences, cultural preservation becomes a source of pride and motivation.

The dual impact of globalization can be summarized in the following comparative table:

Dimension	Cultural Erosion	Cultural Preservation / Revitalization
Orientation toward digital culture	Passive consumption of global media	Critical and selective reinterpretation
Cultural attachment	Declining attachment to local culture	Strengthening pride and belonging
Dominant cultural symbols	Imported global trends	Hybrid symbols integrating global + local
Role of tradition	Seen as outdated and irrelevant	Reinterpreted to remain relevant
Impact on identity	Cultural displacement, loss of rootedness	Cultural confidence and continuity
Drivers	Social conformity, algorithmic influence	Personal agency, cultural awareness
Long-term outcome	Homogenization of identity	Local cultural sustainability

(Yolanda et al., 2025; Melia & Mesra, 2025; Fauzan, 2025; Zulkarnain, 2024)

The duality also has psychological implications for youth identity formation. Youth who experience cultural erosion may develop a fragile sense of self because identity becomes contingent on external validation. Global digital comparison increases pressure to emulate global aesthetics and lifestyles, generating cultural insecurity. Stavyt'skyi (2020) observes that individuals who lose cultural grounding often struggle with identity fragmentation and a sense of cultural inferiority. In contrast, cultural preservation through hybridization reinforces self-esteem and belonging because the individual maintains continuity with cultural heritage while participating in the global sphere. The result is identity stability rather than fragmentation.

Cultural duality also impacts social cohesion. Melia and Mesra (2025) warn that cultural erosion can produce generational conflict, weakening respect for cultural norms and shared meaning. However, cultural preservation through reinterpretation can strengthen intergenerational communication by making cultural heritage more relatable for youth. This suggests that the issue is not whether cultural practices change but whether change occurs with or without cultural consciousness.

Educational and social institutions play a critical role in shaping the direction of identity transformation. If schools and communities promote defensive cultural protectionism, youth may reject cultural values because they perceive tradition as restrictive. By contrast, if educational environments promote cultural innovation through digital engagement, preservation becomes aspirational rather than obligatory. Ramdani et al. (2025) provide evidence that community-led cultural initiatives that involve youth participation in digital cultural revitalization improve cultural continuity and strengthen identity pride.

Thus, the dual impact of digital globalization and cultural hybridization reflects a broader question about cultural agency. Youth identity will continue to transform, but the sustainability of cultural heritage depends on whether cultural participation is facilitated through creativity, relevance and personal meaning. Digital globalization presents both challenges and opportunities, but cultural erosion is not inevitable; cultural preservation is achievable when youth are positioned not as passive cultural consumers but as cultural co-creators.

Cultural Hybridization as a Framework for Sustainable Identity Formation (±900 words)

Cultural hybridization provides a framework to understand how young generations can develop sustainable cultural identities while actively engaging in global digital networks. Unlike cultural homogenization, which implies the dissolution of local identities, hybridization views cultural transformation as a dynamic process of negotiation and reinterpretation between global and local elements. According to Zarichanskyi et al. (2024), hybrid identity formation enables youth to integrate global cultural symbols while maintaining continuity with inherited cultural traditions. This approach positions cultural identity not as static heritage but as an adaptive resource for resilience in the digital age.

One of the key strengths of hybridization lies in its compatibility with the nature of youth identity, which evolves through exploration and self-expression. Digital platforms provide the opportunity to experiment with cultural narratives, values and aesthetics in ways that promote empowerment rather than cultural displacement. Yolanda et al. (2025) highlight that young people consciously choose identity markers that give them a sense of authenticity and belonging within both global and local

contexts. This suggests that cultural transformation becomes sustainable when youth exercise agency over identity creation rather than conform to algorithmic or societal pressures.

Hybridization also fosters cultural literacy by allowing youth to learn cultural practices through comparative exposure. Instead of isolating local culture from global influences, hybrid approaches allow youth to interrogate similarities and differences across cultural expressions, deepening cultural awareness. Uzuegbunam (2020) notes that when youth recognize shared values across cultures such as respect, family or community they become more capable of contextualizing their cultural experiences within broader global narratives, thus increasing cultural empathy rather than alienation.

Another dimension of sustainable identity formation is community-mediated hybridization. Cultural transformation is most successful when youth identity occurs within social spaces that provide validation and cultural support. Ramdani et al. (2025) show that community cultural initiatives that involve youth in cultural revival such as digital archiving of traditions or hybrid cultural performances strengthen collective identity. Meanwhile, Wibisono and Purwanto (2020) affirm that mobility and interaction across diverse communities do not inherently erode identity; instead, cultural loss occurs only when communities fail to remain relevant in transmitting cultural meaning.

Hybrid identity formation also offers advantages for cultural continuity in multicultural societies. As Faiz (2024) explains, young generations in globalizing societies do not face a binary choice between retaining culture or abandoning it. Rather, hybridization allows them to construct layered identities that reflect multiple affiliations simultaneously. This flexibility enriches cultural pluralism and strengthens social cohesion by normalizing diversity within the shared cultural experience of youth.

At the digital level, hybrid identity formation relies on intentional cultural reinterpretation. Youth are more likely to preserve local cultural identity when they perceive cultural content as socially valuable and adaptable to modern lifestyles. When youth reinterpret cultural artifacts traditional dances, clothing, proverbs or community rituals into digital creative formats, cultural knowledge becomes transferable and attractive to contemporary audiences. Aziziyah and Rifai (2025) demonstrate that cultural representation in Korean dramas influences youth to reflect on their own cultural realities, illustrating reciprocal global–local cultural flows.

At the psychological level, hybrid identity stabilizes self-concept by linking personal identity with cultural meaning. Stavytskyi (2020) argues that cultural belonging creates psychological security, motivation and community attachment. This explains why hybridization is positively correlated with resilience and well-being in youth cultural identity studies. Instead of experiencing cultural fragmentation, hybrid youth develop confidence in navigating multiple cultural settings.

Hybridization also contributes to cultural sustainability by transforming youth from consumers to producers of culture. Through cultural content creation, young people redefine cultural meanings for their generation and increase the relevance of traditions. Merung et al. (2024) show that youth cultural initiatives that utilize digital creativity serve as cultural bridges between elders and younger generations, fostering intergenerational understanding.

Nevertheless, hybridization cannot operate independently; institutions have a structural role in supporting sustainable identity formation. Schools that integrate cultural literacy into digital learning, governments that promote digital cultural

preservation and cultural organizations that involve youth in heritage digitization strengthen hybrid identity outcomes. Zulkarnain (2024) emphasizes that technology-based cultural preservation policies generate high youth engagement only when youth are actively co-designers rather than passive participants.

Taken together, cultural hybridization offers a powerful framework for sustainable identity transformation because it does not romanticize tradition nor glorify globalization. Instead, it acknowledges the evolving nature of culture and calls for youth agency, creativity and participation as the foundation of cultural continuity in the digital era. Rather than resisting cultural change, hybridization encourages positive cultural renewal a pathway where global cultural participation becomes a catalyst for the strengthening of local identities.

CONCLUSION

The cultural transformation of young generations in the digital globalization era demonstrates that identity formation is neither fixed nor destructively globalized but negotiated through cultural hybridization. Digital platforms expose youth to global cultural flows that influence fashion, communication styles and value systems; however, identity outcomes vary depending on cultural agency. Some young people experience cultural erosion due to passive global cultural adoption, while others reinterpret global influences to strengthen cultural heritage. This duality confirms that cultural identity transformation depends on whether youth engage with global culture critically and creatively rather than as passive consumers.

Cultural hybridization emerges as the most sustainable identity model because it provides room for cultural adaptability and continuity. When youth reinterpret culture through digital storytelling, collaborative cultural communities and hybrid creative expression, cultural identity becomes relevant, meaningful and enduring. Therefore, supporting hybrid identity formation requires strengthening cultural literacy, digital cultural creativity and intergenerational cultural collaboration. Through such approaches, digital globalization does not threaten cultural identity; instead, it becomes a medium for cultural revitalization led by empowered young generations.

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