THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CULTURAL IDENTITY FORMATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

This research aims to examine the role of social media in cultural identity formation through a comprehensive literature review. Social media has become an important platform for cultural preservation and promotion, allowing individuals and communities to share and celebrate their cultural heritage with a wider audience. In addition, social media supports the creative expression of cultural identity that can strengthen a sense of belonging and pride. However, on the other hand, social media also presents challenges, such as cultural homogenisation, threats to local traditions, and reinforcement of negative stereotypes. Conflict and polarisation in online discussions can undermine harmony between cultural communities, while superficial interactions can diminish the value and sustainability of cultural practices. Therefore, users and policymakers need to critically address the role of social media to ensure it supports cultural diversity and progress.
Keywords: *social media, cultural identity.*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran media sosial dalam pembentukan identitas budaya melalui tinjauan literatur yang komprehensif. Media sosial telah menjadi platform penting untuk pelestarian dan promosi budaya, memungkinkan individu dan komunitas untuk berbagi dan merayakan warisan budaya mereka dengan audiens yang lebih luas. Selain itu, media sosial mendukung ekspresi kreatif identitas budaya yang dapat memperkuat rasa kepemilikan dan kebanggaan. Namun, di sisi lain, media sosial juga menghadirkan tantangan, seperti homogenisasi budaya, ancaman terhadap tradisi lokal, dan penguatan stereotip negatif. Konflik dan polarisasi dalam diskusi online dapat merusak kerukunan antar komunitas budaya, sementara interaksi dangkal dapat mengurangi nilai dan keberlanjutan praktik budaya. Oleh karena itu, pengguna dan pembuat kebijakan perlu menyikapi peran media sosial dengan kritis untuk memastikan media sosial mendukung keberagaman dan kemajuan budaya.
Kata Kunci: media sosial, identitas budaya.

Introduction

In an era of globalisation marked by advances in information technology, social media has become an integral part of everyday life. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok not only change the way individuals interact with each other, but also influence the way culture is exchanged and perceived (Sudarmo et al., 2021); (Sun & Zhang, 2021). On the one hand, social media serves as a powerful tool to strengthen the expression of cultural identity, providing a space for individuals and communities to share and celebrate their culture on a global stage. These platforms enable faster and wider dissemination of cultural information, and help maintain cultural traditions among the diaspora (Feldman, 2022); (Aslan, 2017).

Cultural identity plays a crucial role in giving individuals and groups a sense of self-awareness and purpose in an increasingly connected global society. Amidst globalisation, which

tends to blur geographical and cultural boundaries, cultural identity helps maintain the uniqueness and diversity that is the wealth of humanity (Sadowski, 2021). Through cultural identity, individuals can feel connected to their roots, the traditions, values, and history that make up who they are. This is not only important for individuals' emotional and psychological stability, but also enriches social interactions by providing context and meaning in intercultural exchanges (Schmidt, 2021).

In an interconnected global context, cultural identity also serves as a tool to increase understanding and tolerance between people. By understanding and appreciating cultural diversity, the global community can work together more effectively to address worldwide issues such as climate change, social injustice, and international conflict (Aslan et al., 2019). Cultural identity not only strengthens solidarity and pride among community members, but also promotes cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation. Therefore, preserving and celebrating cultural identity is crucial in the era of globalisation to create a more inclusive, just and harmonious world (Bruns, 2021).

However, on the other hand, social media also brings significant challenges to cultural identity. The phenomenon of globalisation through social media can lead to cultural homogenisation, where local cultural values are threatened by the dominance of popular culture shaped by media power. The simplification of cultural elements for global consumption can obscure local diversity and uniqueness. Moreover, social media is often fertile ground for the spread of negative stereotypes and misleading information about other cultures, which can reinforce prejudice and decrease cultural tolerance (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022).

In this context, it is important to examine how social media influence the formation and transformation of cultural identities. Examining the role of social media in this process can provide insights into how individuals and communities can maintain and celebrate their culture, while facing the challenges of homogenisation and stereotyping (Aslan & Setiawan, 2019); (Aslan, Suhari, et al., 2020). Furthermore, this research can help identify strategic ways to positively utilise social media to support the preservation and acceptance of diverse cultures.

Therefore, this study aims to conduct a literature review on the influence of social media in cultural identity formation, in the hope of presenting a more comprehensive understanding of this dynamic in the modern context.

Research Methods

The study in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method is a systematic approach in collecting and analysing information available in published literature. This research aims to summarise, compare and evaluate findings from various sources to provide a comprehensive and in-depth overview of a particular topic. (Fadli, 2021); (Setiowati, 2016).

Results and Discussion
Positive Influence of Social Media on Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a collection of characteristics, values, beliefs, traditions, norms, language, and practices that distinguish one group of people from another. It serves as the main pillar that shapes the way individuals or groups view themselves and the world around them,

and provides a sense of togetherness and unification within a community. Through cultural identity, individuals can recognise and appreciate ancestral heritage, while creating continuity and renewal in the values they uphold (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021).

The elements of cultural identity include various aspects that reflect the lives and customs of a group of people, including language, art, customs, beliefs, values, social norms, and ritual practices. Language serves as the primary means of communication that shapes and expresses cultural experiences and meanings. The arts, such as music, dance, theatre, and visual arts, reflect a culture's aesthetics and the way it views beauty and emotional expression (Lievrouw, 2023). Customs and ritual practices regulate social and spiritual behaviour and strengthen social relations within communities. Beliefs and values serve as moral and ethical foundations that direct the actions of individuals and groups, while social norms define the expectations and rules followed in daily interactions. All these elements together form a unique and dynamic cultural identity (Uscinski et al., 2021).

Social media is an internet-based platform or service that allows its users to create, share and exchange information, ideas, messages and multimedia content with others around the world. Social media includes various forms, such as social networking (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging (such as Twitter), photo and video sharing (such as Instagram, YouTube), discussion forums, and blogging. These platforms have revolutionised the way individuals communicate and interact, form friendship networks, build communities and develop digital identities. In addition, social media also provides space for public participation in important discussions and disseminates information at an incredible speed (Leonhardt & Overå, 2021).

The main characteristics of social media include interactivity, user participation, and high connectedness. Interactivity enables users to be not only consumers but also producers of content, allowing them to interact directly with fellow users and contribute to the global conversation. User participation encourages collaboration and active involvement in content creation and dissemination (Smith et al., 2021). High connectedness means that users can connect and interact with others without geographical boundaries, forming vast and dynamic social networks. In addition, social media is also characterised by its ability to store and categorise large amounts of data, which can be processed for various needs, ranging from advertising to social analysis. All these characteristics make social media a very influential tool in modern life (Abkenar et al., 2021).

Social media has a significant positive influence on cultural identity, which can be seen in several key aspects. Firstly, social media facilitates the preservation and dissemination of local cultures and cultural heritage around the world. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram or Facebook, communities can share their stories, traditions, music, dances and customs with a global audience (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024); (Aslan, Sihaloho, et al., 2020). This not only helps preserve cultures that may be endangered but also gives people from different backgrounds the opportunity to learn and appreciate cultural diversity.

Secondly, social media creates a space for cultural expression and pride among the younger generation. With the support of technology, young people can more easily access, absorb and then display elements of their cultural identity in the form of creative content. Hashtags, challenges and social media trends often gain global popularity, offering innovative

ways for young people to celebrate and promote their culture. This helps to strengthen cultural identity amidst globalisation, which often affects local values and traditions (Donnan & Wilson, 2021).

Third, social media plays a role in strengthening cultural communities around the world by building strong and supportive social networks. People who share a cultural background or are interested in a particular culture can join online groups or communities to share experiences, information and support. This strengthens relationships between community members and reinforces a sense of community and solidarity. In addition, collaboration and cultural exchange across countries is also facilitated, creating a bridge that connects different cultures and promotes global awareness (Banerjee et al., 2024).

Finally, social media also enables advocacy and awareness of important cultural issues. Cultural activists and organisations can use these platforms to educate the public, encourage the protection of cultural heritage, and fight for the cultural rights and identities of marginalised groups. Successful social media campaigns can attract international attention and gain widespread support to protect or celebrate important aspects of cultural identity that may be under threat. As such, social media has an important role to play in maintaining and developing cultural identity in the context of a changing world.

The Negative Effects of Social Media on Cultural Identity

While social media brings many benefits to the preservation and promotion of cultural identities, there are undeniably a number of negative influences that also need to be considered. First, social media often leads to cultural homogenisation, where the dominance of popular culture from certain countries-such as the United States-makes it harder for local cultures to survive (Sheludiakova et al., 2021). Widespread global trends can obscure and reduce the uniqueness of local cultures when people, especially the younger generation, tend to imitate lifestyles, languages and values popularised through social media (Santos et al., 2022).

Second, social media can also lead to cultural simplification and stereotyping. In an attempt to attract attention in a short period of time, cultural content is often presented in a superficial and sensationalised form. This can reinforce inaccurate and harmful stereotypes about certain cultural groups, as well as detract from a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the culture. Such stereotypes not only damage a culture's image in the eyes of the outside world, but can also harm individuals within that community by influencing how they view themselves (Magis-Weinberg et al., 2021).

Third, social media also risks fuelling conflict and cultural polarisation. False or misleading narratives, fake news and provocations are often widespread through online platforms, resulting in intercultural tensions. Cultural debates on social media can turn into aggressive and unhealthy debates, which instead of promoting dialogue and mutual understanding, exacerbate divisions. This kind of polarisation can weaken social harmony and solidarity and ultimately undermine the fabric of shared cultural identity (Avruch, 2022).

Finally, over-reliance on social media can undermine traditional ways of sharing and learning culture. For example, oral traditions that were once conveyed through stories and in-person interactions could lose relevance when people prefer instant and visual information from social media platforms. Face-to-face interactions that are rich in cultural values and ethics can

be eroded by virtual communications that are often more superficial and disconnected from the broader cultural context. This can result in the degradation of cultural values that can only be fully understood and appreciated through face-to-face interactions in traditional communities.

Conclusion

The role of social media in the formation of cultural identity, it can be concluded that social media has a dual role that is contradictory. On the one hand, social media offers a powerful platform for cultural preservation and promotion. It allows individuals and communities to share, learn and celebrate their culture in ways that were previously impossible. These interactive tools can extend the reach of local cultures to a global audience and facilitate greater intercultural dialogue. Social media also supports individuals in creatively expressing their cultural identities, which can strengthen their sense of belonging and pride in their cultural heritage.

On the other hand, the literature also points to significant challenges that the use of social media presents to cultural identity. Social media can lead to cultural homogenisation and threaten the integrity of local traditions and values, as well as simplify and reinforce negative cultural stereotypes. The conflict and polarisation that often emerge in online discussions can undermine harmony between cultural communities. In addition, more superficial cultural interactions on social media can diminish the value and sustainability of cultural practices that require deeper understanding and respect. Therefore, it is important for users and policymakers to critically address the role of social media by paying attention to both aspects to ensure that social media serves as a tool that supports cultural diversity and sustainability.

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