# Global and Local Cultural Contestation in the Digital Age: Indonesian Gen Z's Responses to Foreign Cultures and National Identity

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**Abstract.** Social globalization has become inevitable in today's information society. Social media plays a growing role as an apparatus for transforming society into global citizens with significant exposure to foreign cultures. This article examines the multicultural experiences of Generation Z in Indonesia through social media, focusing on the contestation between foreign cultural exposure and their love for Indonesia's national culture. Using qualitative methods, the research data were collected through in-depth interviews with three informants who have interacted extensively with foreign cultures. The findings reveal that the informants have been intensely exposed to foreign cultures, especially Korean, Japanese, and global lifestyle trends. Social media algorithms play a significant role in amplifying their exposure to global culture. Despite this, they maintain a strong love for Indonesian culture. They acknowledge that the forces of globalization may shift their national cultural identity. However, they hope Indonesia will strategically and creatively respond to this challenge by promoting and globalizing its culture through digital technology, particularly for Generation Z.

**Keywords:** Ethnocentrism, Information Society, Multiculturalism, Social Globalization, Social Media

## 1    Introduction

Globalization has become a prominent phenomenon in modern life, particularly among Generation Z, who have grown up in the digital age. Robertson[1] defines globalization as the process of shrinking the world and increasing awareness of the world as a whole, creating interactions between global and local cultures. This process presents challenges to local cultural identity, as global culture—often dominated by countries with strong economic and cultural influence—can overshadow local cultural spaces in various nations[2]. Globalization involves an increasing exchange of ideas, culture, technology, and economic practices across the world, affecting multiple dimensions of life, including economic, political, social, and cultural spheres. It is characterized by the exchange of information, technology, labor mobility, global culture, and political interconnections.

Buchholz.et al [3] describe globalization as the internationalization of all relationships in modern society, significantly impacting various aspects of human life. According to Inglehart[4], cultural change is being driven by younger generations replacing older ones in the adult population. Smith et al.[5]argue that Culture is a way of life followed by a group, encompassing language, religion, customs, values, and traditions that are passed down through generations.. As a form of renewal, globalization presents opportunities and challenges, including the risk of foreign cultures eroding local wisdom if not properly filtered and adapted. This transformation is accelerated through social and mass media.

Through social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, young people worldwide are exposed to diverse foreign cultures, often resulting in the adoption of global values and lifestyles [6]. Social media refers to online platforms or applications that allow users to create, share, and interact with content. These platforms facilitate communication and engagement through formats such as text, images, videos, and links. Social media has become an integral part of modern life, significantly influencing interaction patterns. In this context, Indonesian Generation Z is no exception, frequently exposed to popular foreign cultures, particularly Korean, which are highly appealing to youth [7]. However, amidst the strong currents of globalization, questions arise about how local cultural identity, in this case, Indonesian culture, is preserved and understood by the younger generation.

Generation Z's exposure to various globalization phenomena can be analyzed through the lens of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism refers to the presence of diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions, and social groups within a society, recognizing the value of different cultural identities, values, and norms. It promotes the recognition, appreciation, and acceptance of differences within society, viewing diversity as a strength. Multiculturalism goes beyond coexistence, emphasizing cultural exchange and shared experiences to foster a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Apriliani et al.[8] argue that in a multicultural society, diversity is seen as a strength and potential for achieving common goals. In facing the reality of multiculturalism, it is essential to deeply understand cultural diversity, respect differences, and strive to build an inclusive and just society. However, an opposing concept to multiculturalism is ethnocentrism.

Ethnocentrism refers to the tendency to judge other cultures by the standards of one's own culture. The term was introduced by sociologist William Graham Sumner in the early 20th century. Ethnocentric individuals view their own culture as superior while considering other cultures inferior or wrong. Ethnocentrism can lead to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination against other cultural groups. On the one hand, it can serve as a defense mechanism for local cultures to resist foreign cultural influence. However, if not managed properly, ethnocentrism can result in rejecting positive elements from global cultures that could enrich local culture [9].

In contrast to the irrational nature of ethnocentrism, nationalism plays a crucial role in this context as a form of loyalty and love for one's country and national culture. In the globalization era, nationalism not only serves as a marker of national identity but also as a form of resistance against the homogenization of global culture [10]. For

Indonesian Generation Z, nationalism can be a tool to negotiate their identity amid foreign cultural influences. This research aims to understand how Indonesian Generation Z navigates the contest between local and global cultures, focusing on how they perceive their cultural identity in the social media-dominated global environment.

The study will also examine the extent to which ethnocentrism and nationalism contribute to preserving local cultural identity among Generation Z and how digital technology can be used to promote and globalize Indonesian culture.

## 2       Method

This qualitative study aims to explore the multicultural experiences of Indonesia's Generation Z. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, with informants selected intentionally—Indonesian Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) who interact intensively with social media influencers from other countries. Data validation was conducted using triangulation, as the researcher also interviewed government representatives from the Directorate of Culture, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, at both national and provincial levels, as well as informants from cultural communities in various regions.

## 3       Result and Discussion

Generation Z refers to the demographic cohort born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. They grew up in the digital era, with access to technologies such as the internet, social media, and smart devices from a young age. This sets them apart from previous generations, like Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation X. Gen Z is known as "digital natives," meaning they are deeply accustomed to technology and the internet, relying on digital devices for almost every aspect of their daily lives [11].

As digital natives, technology is a daily necessity for Gen Z. The "Indonesia Gen Z Report 2022" by IDN Media, in collaboration with Populix, reveals that the majority of Gen Z spends more than three hours per day on social media.
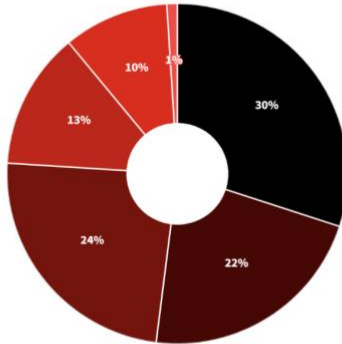
**Fig. 1.** Screen Time Indonesian Gen Z

What do Gen Z do when they enter the digital world? The same report shows that 86% of Gen Z uses their online time to access social media.
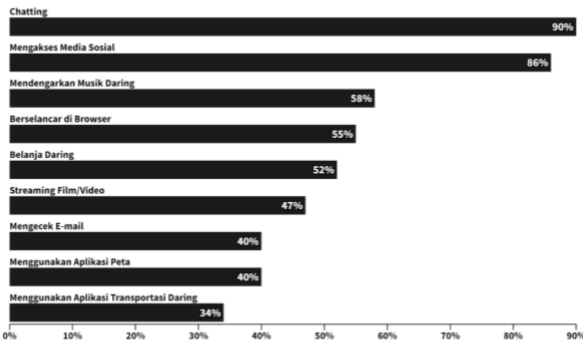


**Fig. 2.** Gen Z Activity on Social Media

In line with the above data, the three informants in this study—Bintang, Irsan, and Kim—reported intense interactions on social media. On average, they use more than three social media platforms.

"I have almost all the social media platforms—X, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and even Reddit, which I access using a VPN. I was familiar with early platforms like Friendster, as my brother is a programmer, so I've known these platforms for a long time. I also used Blackberry Messenger when it was trendy, along with Path, Line, and KakaoTalk," said Bintang (20), interviewed on August 24, 2024.

Similarly, the second informant, Irsan (27), claimed to have accounts on almost all social media platforms, including X, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and various messaging apps like Line, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

The third informant, Kim (22), uses Instagram more frequently due to its data efficiency. However, Kim also has TikTok and messaging accounts like WhatsApp and Telegram.

Gen Z generally prefers social media and digital platforms for information rather than traditional media [12]. They gravitate towards visual and interactive content.

Regarding the content they access through their social media accounts, each informant had different preferences. Bintang, a first-year university student, identifies as a lover of Japanese culture and follows social media accounts related to manga, Japanese comics.

"I'm a cartoonist and a big fan of manga, especially Japanese culture. I also create content there. I'm a cosplayer too. Besides Japanese cartoons, I'm into underground music. I'm part of an underground musician fandom because they organize positive activities like fundraisers. But this fandom is local," said Bintang (20), interviewed on August 24, 2024.

Unlike Bintang, who loves Japanese culture, Kim is a K-Pop enthusiast. Kim said he adores South Korean bands, both girl and boy groups, and follows many K-Pop social media accounts.

"For me, it's more about dramas, particularly K-dramas. I download K-dramas and follow all the gossip about Korean celebrities. I also keep up with South Korean lifestyle trends, which I follow for events like cosplay," said Kim (22), interviewed on August 24, 2024.

Meanwhile, the third informant, Irsan, often follows lifestyle trends and influencer content on Instagram.

"I need material for my broadcasts, so I actively follow global trends in health, music, film, and lifestyle. But I get this information from mainstream media, like VOA and CNBC," said Irsan (27), interviewed on August 24, 2024.

This study found that the informants, part of Indonesia's Gen Z, tend to favor foreign cultures, such as Korean and Japanese culture, as they find them more appealing than Indonesian culture. This attraction is not solely due to the intrinsic appeal of foreign cultures but is also influenced by external factors like family influence, limited exposure to national culture in education, and the way social media algorithms operate.

One informant stated, "Korean culture is more modern and appealing compared to ours. The music, fashion, and dramas are way cooler" (Kim, 22, interviewed on August 24, 2024).

This aligns with Tomlinson's [2] theory of cultural globalization, which suggests that globalization brings with it global cultures that possess high commercial and aesthetic appeal, potentially shifting attention away from local cultures perceived as outdated or less attractive. In this context, Korean and Japanese cultures are not just forms of entertainment but symbols of modernity coveted by the younger generation.

The study also reveals that family plays a significant role in shaping the cultural preferences of the informants. Some informants noted that their families indirectly encouraged them to adopt foreign cultures by disregarding or even rejecting local cultural traits. One informant shared, "My parents often tell me to lose my regional accent so I'll appear more modern and less backward." This reflects Sumner's [13] concept of ethnocentrism, where families act as social agents, indoctrinating certain values—in this case, pushing children to reject their local identity in favor of global standards perceived as superior.

Moreover, the lack of exposure to national culture in schools also contributes to the younger generation's preference for foreign cultures. One informant expressed that lessons on Indonesian culture at school are minimal and unengaging: "At school, we barely learn about our culture, and when we do, it's boring," they said. This indicates that the education system has not fully succeeded in instilling a love for national culture, which should serve as a bulwark against the tide of globalization. Robertson argues that globalization not only creates global interconnectedness but can also erode local identities if not countered by strong educational efforts to preserve and promote national culture[1].

Another significant factor contributing to the informants' preference for foreign cultures is the algorithmic design of social media platforms. These algorithms present content relevant to users' interests based on their previous activities. One informant noted, "I see more content about Korean and Japanese culture in my social media feed, so I'm more familiar with that than with Indonesian culture." Social media algorithms reinforce exposure to foreign cultures already favored by the informants, while limiting access to engaging information about Indonesian culture, contributing to a cultural bias where the younger generation is more exposed to and interested in global cultures dominating their social media feeds.

Boyd and Ellison's [6] theory of social media posit that these platforms not only serve as communication tools but also act as cultural curators, influencing users' cultural preferences. Algorithms prioritizing engagement led to repeated exposure to foreign cultural content, thus strengthening preferences for those cultures. Conversely, the lack of appealing local cultural content on these platforms makes young people feel their own culture is less relevant or interesting.

When the researcher inquired with the government, a source from the Directorate of Culture at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology stated that numerous efforts have been undertaken to preserve national culture, including utilizing advanced digital technology and adapting to the logic of social media. However, the primary focus should be on reviving narratives about Indonesian culture

in formats that can be consumed by the public, particularly by Generation Z, in the digital era.

Cultural communities also indicated that there remains considerable interest among Generation Z in traditional culture. They have implemented various strategies in response to the development of digital technology and have designed numerous programs aimed at engaging Generation Z to become more familiar with and appreciate Indonesia's traditional culture.

In the era of social media, when numerous contents related to traditional culture goes viral, there is a tendency among Generation Z to engage with such content primarily due to the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). However, cultural experts do not view this as a concern. According to them, FOMO can still serve as an entry point for introducing Indonesia's traditional culture, potentially fostering a deeper appreciation for it.

Nevertheless, amid the dominance of foreign culture and family influence pushing for the adoption of global values, the informants still show a sense of nationalism, albeit in a more adaptive form. Although they enjoy foreign cultures, they maintain a love for Indonesia and hope the country can compete globally by leveraging digital technology to promote local culture. This aligns with Smith's [10] view that nationalism in the globalization era doesn't have to mean rejecting foreign cultures but can instead mean preserving and developing a national identity within the global arena.

This study suggests a contest between local and global cultures among Indonesia's Generation Z. Exposure to foreign cultures through social media, family influence, and a weak educational system makes the younger generation more inclined to adopt global cultures. However, there remains hope and potential for Indonesia to develop attractive strategies to globalize its local culture using digital technology, as an effort to balance global influence while preserving national identity.

## 4        Conclusion

This study reveals that Generation Z in Indonesia tends to favor foreign cultures, particularly Korean and Japanese cultures, because they find them more appealing than local culture. The primary factors influencing this tendency include the intrinsic allure of foreign cultures, family influence encouraging the adoption of global values, the lack of exposure to national culture in schools, and the way social media algorithms reinforce exposure to foreign cultures.

Social media algorithms play a significant role by selectively presenting foreign cultural content that aligns with users' interests, which ultimately limits their access to engaging information about Indonesian culture. This indicates that social media is not only a communication tool but also a cultural curator that can shape the cultural preferences of younger generations.

Despite this, the study also found that Generation Z still demonstrates a strong love for Indonesian culture and hopes that the national culture can compete on a global level. They recognize the importance of attractive strategies to promote Indonesian

culture in the digital era as a form of resistance to the homogenization of global culture.

This conclusion highlights the importance of joint efforts between families, educational institutions, and digital technology to preserve and globalize Indonesian culture in the face of globalization. Only through a holistic approach can Indonesia maintain its cultural identity while becoming a significant player on the global cultural stage.

# 5　　Acknowledgements

# 6　　References

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