Communication Students Perception Of The Impact Of TikTok Use In Forming Cultural Identity And Nationalism In The Era Of Globalization

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of students in the Communication Science Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau on the impact of TikTok usage in shaping cultural identity and nationalism in the era of globalization. The research aims to analyze how TikTok, as a popular digital social media platform, influences students' views and attitudes toward local culture and national identity. Using a mixed-method approach through questionnaires distributed to 50 respondents and in-depth interviews with active TikTok users, this study explores patterns of content consumption and production related to cultural and national themes. The findings indicate that while TikTok enables students to express and promote local cultural elements—such as traditional dances, local cuisine, and regional languages—there is also a risk of cultural identity dilution due to exposure to global content. Regarding nationalism, the results show limited active engagement, as students tend to consume rather than produce content with nationalistic messages. The study highlights the relevance of Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Digital Nationalism Theory in understanding these phenomena. In conclusion, TikTok has the potential to strengthen cultural identity and nationalism among youth if used wisely and creatively. Educational institutions and policymakers are encouraged to facilitate programs and digital literacy to support the creation of cultural and national content that appeals to young audiences.

Keywords: cultural identity; digital nationalism; social media; student perception; TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the era of globalization has changed the way humans interact and form their identities. Social media is now an important part of modern society, where the boundaries between private and public, local and global spaces are becoming increasingly blurred. The younger generation, including students, are the most active users of digital media. They not only consume information, but also become content producers that directly influence how they view culture and nationality.

One of the most popular social media among students is TikTok. This application is used for various purposes ranging from entertainment, self-expression, dissemination of information, to social campaigns. Students of the Communication Studies Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau (UMRI) are also actively using TikTok in their daily lives. They upload content that reflects their lifestyle, cultural values, and attitudes towards national issues. However, there are concerns that excessive exposure to global content on TikTok can shift the orientation of local culture and weaken the spirit of nationalism. Conversely, TikTok also has the potential as a medium to strengthen cultural identity and nationalism if used positively and creatively. Theoretically, this phenomenon is explained through the Globalization Theory by Anthony Giddens, which states that globalization is the intensification of social relations across countries, so that local events can be influenced by global dynamics. Social media such as TikTok have

become the main channel for global cultural exchange, allowing values, lifestyles, and symbols from various countries to enter the cultural consumption of the young generation of Indonesia. This was emphasized by Oktarina, Sarmiati & Asrinaldi who stated that TikTok was able to 'erode' local culture due to the rapid practice of cultural exchange (Oktarina et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the Social Identity Theory by Henri Tajfel is very relevant, because it explains that individual identities are formed through their affiliation with social groups—which are now channeled digitally through social media such as TikTok. Students can identify themselves as part of a digital community, for example a community of local culture lovers or digital nationalism, through the content they produce or consume. This phenomenon is supported by research by Assidiq, Alfarhani, & Nandhika (2023) in the journal "Analisa Peran Media Sosial Dalam Membentuk Identitas Nasional Generasi Millennial di Indonesia", which shows that interactions on social media have a significant role in shaping perceptions and bonds of national identity in the millennial generation (Fidi et al., n.d.).

Finally, the Uses and Gratifications Theory by Blumler & Katz explains that media users choose platforms to fulfill psychological and social needs—including entertainment, information, self-expression, and social connections. In the TikTok era, students actively choose content according to such needs and form mechanisms for affirming cultural identity and nationalism through their interactions. This principle is reinforced by research by Nabila & Putri, which shows that social media is a dynamic space for cultural expression, although it also carries the risk of homogenization and commercialization of identity (Fadilah et al., 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. TikTok As Digital Social Media

TikTok is a short video-based social media platform that allows users to create and share creative content quickly and widely. This application has become popular among teenagers and students because of its interactive features and algorithms that can adjust content to user preferences. TikTok has an important role in shaping communication patterns, cultural expressions, and social attitudes of today's digital society.

The development of information technology demands citizens to have skills in utilizing digital platforms, including social media such as TikTok. Citizenship skills enable citizens to adapt to the digital era, fostering active participation in public decision-making, critical thinking in receiving information, and constructive interaction in the digital public sphere. Based on the findings, more than 60% of students using TikTok show strong digital citizenship skills across five dimensions: digital literacy, critical thinking, ethical behavior, understanding digital rights and responsibilities, and civic engagement(Isma & Yusuf, 2025).

B. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a social construct that reflects an individual's membership in a particular cultural community, characterized by language, values, symbols, traditions,

and ways of life. stated that cultural identity is dynamic, formed through representation and social interaction(Hall, 2014).

In the digital era, social media mediates the process of cultural identity formation through visual, narrative, and symbolic content consumed and produced by users. Local cultural content spread on TikTok can strengthen students' cultural awareness, but it also risks being displaced by the dominance of global content that is not appropriate to the local context.

C. Digital Nationalism

Digital nationalism is a form of nationalism that emerges and develops through digital media. nationalism is not only formed through state institutions, but also through virtual public spaces that allow national narratives to be constructed in a participatory manner(Eriksen, 2007).

Through TikTok, students can express their sense of nationalism through content that shows pride in local culture, regional languages, state symbols, or national issues. This digital nationalism is a response to globalization and is a strategy to maintain national identity amidst the flow of foreign cultures.

D. Theory Uses and Gratifications

The results show why TikTok is chosen as the best mass medium in marketing, especially when seen from the point of view of market players, based on the uses and gratification theory. The theory helps to explain users' needs and why they engage with content for entertainment, social interaction, and personal branding(Mutiara & Kinkin Yuliaty Subarsa Putri, 2023).

TikTok provides a space to fulfill all of these needs in an engaging and easily accessible format. In this context, students choose to use TikTok because they gain emotional and social satisfaction from engaging in trends, online communities, and the social interactions that take place within it.

E. Social Identity Theory

Social media plays a crucial role in facilitating the formation of social identity through social categorization, social identification, and social comparison processes(Yang & Syifa Fatimah, 2023).

In using TikTok, students can show their cultural identity through local content such as regional dances, traditional food, or mother tongue. Conversely, if exposed to global content predominantly, it can shift the orientation of identity towards a more cosmopolitan direction and weaken national identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research design that aims to deeply understand the perceptions of students of the Communication Science Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau, regarding the use of TikTok in forming cultural identity and nationalism in the era of globalization. This design was chosen because

qualitative research allows researchers to explore the meanings, views, and experiences of students that cannot be measured only with numbers or quantitative data.

The main data source for this study was active TikTok user students who were selected using purposive sampling, namely selected intentionally based on the consideration that they have relevant and active experience in using TikTok (Aryani et al., n.d.). The use of purposive sampling is also in accordance with the recommendations of previous studies that examined the relationship between TikTok use and cultural expressions of the younger generation in Indonesia (Nabila et al., n.d.).

Data were collected through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews with five active TikTok user students to explore their views and experiences directly, documentation in the form of screenshots of TikTok content relevant to cultural and nationalism issues, and indirect observation of content trends and user interactions on the platform to provide additional context for students' digital behavior. This technique is used so that researchers can obtain a comprehensive picture of how TikTok influences students' perspectives on local culture and nationalism (Wahyu Nugroho & Mulyadi Nugraha, 2021).

All data collected was then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which was carried out through data reduction stages to filter relevant information, present data in the form of descriptive narratives, and draw conclusions that are linked to the Uses and Gratifications theory, Social Identity Theory, and Digital Nationalism. This approach helps researchers to see further how students build cultural identity and nationalism through their digital activities, as well as the challenges and opportunities that arise from the use of TikTok social media in the era of globalization (Aryani et al., n.d.). In addition, Idza Carolin's research is also an important reference, because it links qualitative methods with thematic analysis to see the formation of digital identity (Carolin et al., 2023)Research Methodology is procedures or techniques for conducting research. Use font Times New Roman of 12 pt and adjust line spacing 1,0 in a paragraph of text and between paragraphs. use first linenya 0,8. the format of using such as figure and table, math, abbreviation and acronym, and other recommendations will be shown below.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 50 respondents who were active students of the Communication Science Study Program at the University of Muhammadiyah Riau. The demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that the majority of TikTok users were female, with a percentage of 64%, while males were 36%. This shows that women are more dominant in using TikTok as a medium for expression and consumption of digital content.

In terms of the frequency of TikTok use, 78% of students use this application every day, while 18% access it several times a week, and only 4% stated that they rarely use it (once a week or less). This data shows that TikTok has become an inseparable part of students' daily activities, and shows the high intensity of use of this digital platform.

The main purpose of students in using TikTok is for entertainment, which reaches 85%. In addition, there are also 42% who use this application to search for information and educational content, 36% for self-expression such as making and uploading videos, and only 14% stated that they use TikTok as a medium for social campaigns or expressing nationalism. This indicates that the use of TikTok is still more consumptive and recreational, with minimal educational and nationalistic motivations.

B. The Influence of TikTok on Students' Cultural Identity

The questionnaire results show that 62% of students feel that using TikTok has an impact on the formation of their cultural identity. On the positive side, many respondents stated that TikTok serves as a medium to explore and express local culture—for example, by uploading content featuring traditional dances, regional culinary specialties, and the use of native languages. Such content fosters a sense of pride in their own culture and increases awareness of the richness of local traditions.
Furthermore, the variety of Indonesian language usage on TikTok reflects the linguistic identity dynamics of students, while also enriching the local cultural context through the construction of digital expression(Dewani et al., 2024).

This finding is in line with a study by Salsa Nabila, which found a positive correlation between the intensity of TikTok usage and the tendency to display local cultural identity(Nabila et al., n.d.). In addition, it was found that TikTok usage influences students' lifestyle patterns, ranging from time management to content consumption preferences, which have become important aspects in shaping their daily identity(Neng & Abidin, 2023).

However, several respondents also expressed concerns about the erosion of cultural identity due to the dominance of global content, particularly from foreign popular cultures such as South Korea and the West. This is evident from the growing number of students who follow fashion trends, lifestyles, and even social habits from abroad that they encounter on TikTok. The massive and viral nature of global content is seen as having the potential to shift students' interest away from local culture, thereby weakening their attachment to their own cultural identity. In addition, Gen Z students often use TikTok as a "stage for ideal self-existence," which gives rise to digital narcissistic behavior as part of their self-identity construction.(Vera Anggraini et al., 2023).

C. The Influence of TikTok on Student Nationalism

Regarding nationalism, 54% of respondents admitted to having seen or even created nationalist-themed content on TikTok. This content includes celebrating Independence Day, using national songs, spreading national values, and social issues relevant to conditions in Indonesia. However, of that total, only 28% actively linked their activities on TikTok to efforts to strengthen nationalism. This shows that although there is awareness of the importance of national values, real implementation in digital content is still relatively low.

The majority of students (72%) are not fully aware that TikTok can be used as a strategic means to build nationalist awareness among the younger generation. This factor is reinforced by the lack of nationalist-themed content that is interesting and relevant to them. Many feel that nationalist content is often packaged formally and does not follow the style and language of young people, making it less popular and difficult to compete with global entertainment content.

These results are consistent with Idza Carolin's research which states that although TikTok users have a sense of nationalism, it often appears as an emotional reaction rather than a concrete action to create nationalist-themed content (Carolin et al., 2023).

D. In-depth Interview Results

In-depth interviews were conducted with five active TikTok student users to strengthen the findings from the questionnaire results. The interview results showed that the main motivation for students in using TikTok was as a means of entertainment and following viral trends. They consider TikTok as a place to "refresh", relieve stress, and stay connected with their peer community.

Several informants stated that they had a desire to create more educational content or content containing nationalistic messages, but they felt less appreciated by the audience. In addition, the TikTok algorithm which tends to promote entertainment content makes educational and nationalistic content get less exposure. also noted the existence of a 'popularity contest' among TikTokers students, where the number of likes, shares, and followers became a measure of existence as well as the construction of social identity in the digital space(Afdhal et al., 2023). The informants also mentioned that local cultural content such as regional dances or traditional cuisine can be well received, as long as it is packaged in an interesting and funny style.

The sense of nationalism of the informants tends to emerge emotionally, for example when seeing content about the struggles of heroes, videos about regional songs, or national issues such as natural disasters or social conflicts. However, they also realize that their form of nationalism is still passive, not yet accompanied by an awareness to produce or disseminate similar content.

E. Theoretical Discussion

These findings suggest that Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory is highly relevant in this context. College students use TikTok to fulfill their needs for entertainment, information, and self-expression. These needs play a role in shaping digital interaction patterns that indirectly shape their cultural identity and nationalism.

Furthermore, Henri Tajfel's Social Identity theory explains how group identity is formed and strengthened through membership in a particular community. In the context of TikTok, college students represent their cultural identity through the content they consume and produce, such as traditional dances, regional specialties, and regional languages. However, constant exposure to global content has the potential to weaken their attachment to local cultural groups. also explained that the variety of languages that appear on TikTok—such as the use of slang, code-switching, and regional languages—

contribute to the formation of the collective and personal identities of Gen Z college students in the digital space(Febiana Putri et al., 2025).

On the other hand, college students also adopt global cultural trends that are popular on TikTok as part of their self-identity construction. showed that the adoption of Korean fashion through TikTok is an important medium for teenagers to express themselves, where global culture is interpreted as an element of identity personalization(Kristina, 2024).

The theory of Digital Nationalism is also an important reference, where social media such as TikTok actually provides a large space for the expression of nationalism. However, based on the findings of this study, this space has not been fully utilized by students. Digital nationalism is still defeated by the dominance of global entertainment content that is more visually and emotionally attractive.

This is in line with the findings of Putri Nabila & Fadilah Hanysyah (2023) who explained that social media is used more as a space for pop culture expression than to strengthen nationalist content (Carolin et al., 2023).

Thus, TikTok is proven to have great potential in shaping the cultural identity and nationalism of students, but this is highly dependent on how students use and manage the content they consume and produce.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of TikTok has a real influence on the formation of cultural identity and nationalism of students in the Communication Studies Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau in the era of globalization. Through various creative features and algorithms that support content personalization, TikTok has become a medium that is very close to students' lives. This platform is not only a means of entertainment, but also a place to express themselves and voice values related to culture and nationality. Most students feel that TikTok allows them to get to know and display local cultural elements, such as traditional dances, regional culinary specialties, and regional languages, which contribute to strengthening their cultural identity.

However, there is also another side to this phenomenon. TikTok, which is very open to global currents, also shows a fairly strong influence of foreign cultures, raising concerns about a shift in the values and orientation of students' cultural identity towards a more cosmopolitan direction. Intensive exposure to global content risks shifting students' attention from local culture which is actually an important part of their national identity.

In terms of nationalism, it was found that although students are often exposed to and sometimes produce national-themed content, only a small number actively and consistently use TikTok to voice nationalist values. This shows that the awareness of digital nationalism among students is still relatively low, even though its potential is great. The main motivation for using TikTok, which is still focused on entertainment and trends, shows that national values and local culture must be packaged more attractively and in accordance with the communication style of the younger generation in order to compete with more popular global content.

Theoretically, the findings in this study strengthen the relevance of the Uses and Gratifications, Social Identity, and Digital Nationalism theories. Students use TikTok to

fulfill their psychological and social needs, and in the process, help shape the representation of their social identity in the digital realm. Therefore, TikTok can be seen as a strategic space to shape and strengthen the cultural identity and nationalism of the younger generation, as long as its use is directed wisely and creatively.

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