Digital Culture, Global Influences and Cultural Hybridization

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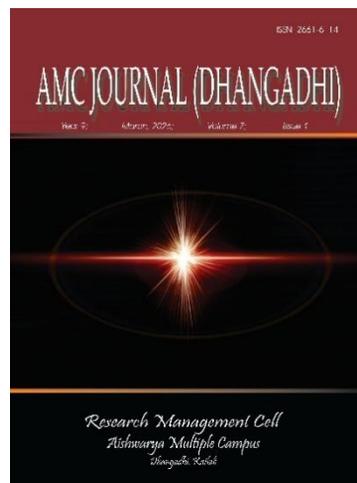
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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed cultural production, circulation and consumption. It has created new spaces for creativity, interaction and identity construction. This study examines the interrelationships of digital culture, global influence and cultural hybridization. It sheds light on how local communities engage with global cultural flows while preserving and reinterpreting their own traditions. Using a conceptual and descriptive methodology based entirely on secondary sources, the research analyses scholarly literature, policy documents and reports published between 2000 and 2025. The study focuses on themes such as global cultural penetration, hybrid cultural practices, identity negotiations and the socio-economic and technological factors that shape digital engagement. The findings indicate that digital culture facilitates cultural exchange and hybridization. It produces new forms of music, language, fashion, storytelling and social practices. However, participation in these processes is uneven. Influenced by access to technology, digital literacy and socio-economic status. Hybrid cultural practices reflect both continuity and change. It illustrates human creativity and adaptability in the digital age. The study concludes that inclusive policies, digital literacy initiatives and equal access to digital platforms are needed to support cultural innovation, preserve local heritage and empower communities to navigate global impacts responsibly.

Keywords: digital culture, globalization, hybridization, identity formation, social media

Introduction

The rise of technology has quietly but profoundly changed the way we create, share and live digital culture in our daily lives. What was once a matter of face-to-face interaction, accepting local cultural and physical isolation, is now increasingly taking shape through screens and online platforms. Social media, streaming services, digital art, online gaming and mobile learning have become central places where people connect, form communities and communicate. "These spaces need to be connected somehow; either in terms of mobility (physical movement) or by looking at how communications and interpersonal relationships develop", (Marino, 2015). Today's culture is not simply inherited or preserved. It is constantly being produced and reshaped through digital interactions. "This new generation, raised under the influence of social media, digital technology, and global values, is expressing its dissatisfaction with the traditional parties through both street protests and digital

movements", (Magar, 2025, p. 257). Digital culture has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary society, influencing how individuals relate to each other and how society understands identity, belonging, and difference.

Digital culture has also intensified the reach and effects of global influence. "It is not merely about acquiring technical skills but embracing a comprehensive approach that recognizes the symbiotic relationship between digital competency and cultural context", (Junaedia A. T. et. al., 2023, p. 116). Ideas, images, lifestyles and cultural symbols now cross borders at a remarkable speed. Often reaching those and places that were previously far from global cultural centers. Through digital media, people are exposed to global music, fashion, political debates and social norms on a daily basis. Which interact with their local cultural environment. Unlike earlier stages of globalization, this process is not entirely one-way. Digital platforms allow users to respond to, reinterpret and modify global content. This also makes cultural exchange more interactive and participatory. "AI technologies, including recommendation algorithms and digital platforms, facilitate interactions among various stakeholders— customers, service providers, and digital intermediaries", (Rawat, 2025). It has blurred the boundaries between what is considered global and local, creating a shared but unequal cultural space further shaped by access, power, and digital literacy.

Within a digitally connected world, cultural hybridization has become a common and visible consequence. Hybrid cultural forms emerge as global influences blend with local traditions, resulting in new expressions that are neither entirely local nor entirely global. "These increasingly multilayered identities are articulated with a variety of changing structures", (Straubhaa, 2008, p. 22). This can be seen in music that blends traditional sounds with global genres, in language that combines local expressions with global slang, or in everyday practices that are shaped by both cultural heritage and digital trends. Cultural hybridization reflects adaptability rather than loss. It shows how cultures respond creatively to change while maintaining meaningful connections with the past. "It involves the blending of cultural practices, symbols, and identities from diverse backgrounds, leading to the emergence of novel and dynamic cultural expressions", (Vedabala, 2025, p. 258). At the same time, such hybrid forms often reveal underlying inequalities as some cultures gain more visibility and recognition in digital spaces than others.

Digital culture also plays a powerful role in shaping individual and collective identities, especially among the younger generation. "Digital technologies encompassing a wide range of electronic tools, systems, and applications have become deeply embedded in daily life worldwide", (Paudel, 2025, p. 18). Online spaces allow individuals to experiment with identity, connect with diverse communities, and access alternative ways of thinking and living. This exposure can broaden perspectives and encourage cultural openness. But it can also create confusion, tension, and conflict. Traditional values can be questioned. Generational divides can deepen, and local beliefs can come into conflict with global ideals. "Global system is the appropriate unit and here we have trends towards global culture, flexible citizens and global economy", (Gyawali, 2023, p. 100). These dynamics are especially important in societies experiencing rapid social transformation, where digital culture becomes both a source of empowerment and a site of cultural conflict.

To understand contemporary cultural change, it is essential to examine digital culture, global influence, and cultural hybridization. "As globalization intensifies interactions among diverse cultures, understanding cultural identity becomes vital", (Faiz, 2024, p. 10). This research approaches the topic

conceptually. It focuses on how digital platforms facilitate global cultural flows. It focuses on how individuals and communities actively engage with them. Rather than treating globalization as a process that erases cultural differences, the study emphasizes human agency, creativity, and negotiation in the formation of hybrid cultures. It seeks to present culture not as a static entity, but as a living, evolving process shaped by digital interactions, global connections, and local meaning-making practices.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual, and descriptive research design based entirely on secondary sources to examine the relationship between digital culture, global influence, and cultural hybridization. Rather than relying on primary field data, the research focuses on a critical analysis of existing scholarly work, policy documents, and empirical studies that explore cultural change in the context of digital globalization. This approach is appropriate to the nature of the research problem, which seeks to understand broad patterns, theoretical debates, and interpretive insights rather than measuring specific behavioral outcomes. By synthesizing diverse perspectives, this study aims to develop a coherent and nuanced understanding of how digital technologies mediate cultural interactions and transformations.

The selection of secondary sources is guided by clear and systematic criteria, ensuring relevance, academic credibility, and analytical depth. Priority is given to journal articles, academic books, edited volumes, and reputable institutional reports that address digital culture, globalization, media studies, and cultural theory. Sources are selected based on their conceptual clarity, theoretical contributions, and relevance to themes such as cultural flows, hybridity, identity formation, and digital participation. In addition, interdisciplinary work from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and communication studies is included to capture the multifaceted nature of digital cultural processes. Non-academic or opinion-based materials are excluded unless they provide important contextual insights into digital cultural practices.

This study primarily covers literature published from the early 2000s to the present. A period that coincides with the rapid expansion of internet access, social media platforms, and mobile technologies worldwide. This time frame allows the research to trace the development of academic discourse on digital culture from early discussions of globalization to more recent analyses of platform-driven cultural hybridization. However, earlier foundational works on globalization and cultural theory were also consulted to provide historical and theoretical grounding. This combination ensures both temporal relevance and conceptual continuity in the analysis.

This study uses a comparative and thematic analytical framework. Key concepts and arguments from selected sources were systematically reviewed, categorized, and compared across different social and cultural contexts. Themes such as global cultural influences, local adaptations, identity negotiations, and power relations in digital spaces are identified and examined in relation to each other. Rather than seeking statistical comparisons, the analysis emphasizes interpretive comparisons, highlighting similarities, differences, and contradictions in scholarly approaches. This framework allows for a deeper understanding of how cultural hybridity manifests itself differently in societies shaped by shared digital infrastructures.

Moreover, this methodology positions the study as a conceptual contribution that synthesizes existing knowledge to advance the understanding of digital culture and cultural hybridization. By relying exclusively on secondary data, the research maintains analytical distance and theoretical breadth, which

enables critical reflection on prevailing assumptions and debates. The descriptive and interpretive nature of the methodology is consistent with the study's aim of explaining complex cultural processes in a global digital context, rather than providing causal or predictive claims. This approach strengthens the relevance of the study for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners interested in the cultural consequences of digital globalization.

Literature Review

Scholarly discussions of digital culture typically begin with the recognition that technological change has transformed culture from a relatively static system of shared meaning into a fluid and constantly evolving process. Early studies of digital media emphasized the shift from mass communication to interactive communication, which highlighted how digital platforms allow users to produce, transmit, and reinterpret cultural content. Culture in the digital age is no longer shaped solely by institutions such as the state, religious institutions, or traditional media. Instead, it emerges through everyday online practices, user participation, and algorithmic mediation. This shift has further encouraged scholars to rethink culture as a networked phenomenon shaped by both human agency and technological structures.

The literature on globalization provides an essential foundation for understanding the global dimension of digital culture. Earlier globalization theories often focused on economic integration and cultural homogeneity. They argued that global capitalism and Western media industries would erode local cultures. "Global flows of information, goods, and people have facilitated a dynamic cultural exchange, offering both opportunities for enrichment and risks of homogenization", (Amin, 2024, p. 11). However, later scholars have challenged this view by emphasizing cultural diversity, resistance, and adaptation. "Postcolonial theory, particularly the concept of cultural differences, explores the impact of colonialism on various cultures and societies in colonial countries", (Islam, 2024, p. 70). Such debates have taken on new relevance with the rise of digital media. Scholars argue that digital technology has accelerated global cultural flows, while also enabling local artists to reinterpret global content. "It is considered a powerful language of new media that reflects and comment on societal norms, including issues of sexism", (Athoi, 2024, p. 102). Globalization is increasingly viewed not as a unidirectional process but as a complex and uneven interaction between global structures and local contexts.

As a major consequence of digital globalization, cultural hybridity has become an important area of research. Cultural hybridity refers to the blending of cultural elements from different origins, resulting in new, mixed forms of expression. "Cultural Hybridity" means forming a new culture by intermingling the two cultures", (Philemon, 2025). Scholars emphasize that hybridization is not a recent phenomenon. But digital technologies have expanded its scale and visibility. Online platforms allow cultural practices to travel at a rapid pace, be creatively reworked, and reach international audiences. Studies highlight how hybrid cultural forms, such as digital music, fashion, language, and visual culture, reflect both continuity with tradition and openness to global influence. "The rise of satellite television, social media, streaming services, and online content has not only facilitated the dissemination of cultural products across borders but has also provided a platform for the creation of hybrid cultural expressions", (Shahzad, 2022, p. 45). This literature goes beyond simple stories of cultural loss, and instead highlights creativity and adaptation.

Research into identity construction in digital spaces deepens the understanding of cultural hybridization. "Developments in the field of science and technology revolutionized the field of information technology that culminated in the superhighways of internet that enabled not only the fasted transfer of information but also the cyberspace, a virtual world parallel to the physical world", (Singh, 2023, p. 56). Scholars argue that digital culture provides individuals with new resources to construct and express identity. "The proliferation of communication technology has enabled people in transforming their activities, bringing together the human brain through artificial intelligence (AI), thereby creating a globalized world", (Paudyal, 2023, p. 92). Online interactions allow people to engage with multiple cultural contexts simultaneously, often leading to hybrid identities that combine local, national, and global elements. This is particularly evident among younger generations, who navigate digital environments as part of their daily lives. However, the literature also notes that digital identity formation is shaped by social inequalities, access to technology, and platform dynamics, which influence the identities that are seen and valued online.

Another important aspect of the literature examines the power relations within digital cultural processes. Digital platforms appear to have democratized cultural production. Scholars warn that they are embedded within global economic and political structures. Large technology corporations shape cultural visibility through algorithms, monetization models, and content mediation practices. This has led to further concerns about cultural dominance, digital colonialism, and the marginalization of less powerful cultures. Studies in this area emphasize that cultural hybridization occurs within unequal power relations. While some cultural forms achieve global recognition, others remain peripheral or invisible.

The literature on language and communication in digital spaces provides insights into cultural transformation. Scholars observe and discuss new linguistic practices that emerge as digital communication evolves, including code-switching, slang, emojis, and hybrid language forms. These practices reflect a mix of global and local influences. They illustrate how language adapts to the digital environment. At the same time, research highlights tensions between global languages and local or indigenous languages, which raises concerns about linguistic inequality and cultural preservation. This body of work demonstrates that cultural hybridization is not only symbolic, but deeply embedded in everyday communication.

Studies focusing on digital culture in the Global South provide important contextual insights. Scholars argue that digital cultural practices in these regions are shaped by historical experiences, socio-economic inequalities, and unequal access to technology. Rather than mimicking global trends, local communities adapt digital tools in ways that reflect their social realities. Research from these contexts highlights the coexistence of tradition and modernity, demonstrating how digital platforms are used to revitalize cultural heritage, mobilize communities, and negotiate identities. This literature further challenges global models of digital culture and emphasizes the importance of contextual analysis.

Overall, the existing literature reveals that digital culture, global influence, and cultural hybridization are deeply interconnected processes shaped by technology, power, and human agency. While scholars agree that digitalization has transformed cultural interactions, debates about its implications for cultural diversity, inequality, and identity continue. This study builds on these debates by synthesizing key theoretical insights, highlighting the dynamic and negotiated nature of cultural hybridization in the

digital age. By adopting a conceptual and descriptive approach, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of culture as an evolving process shaped by global connections and local meaning-making.

Results

Expansion and Reach of Digital Culture

The rapid proliferation of digital technologies, including social media, streaming platforms, mobile applications, and online communities, has significantly expanded access to cultural content globally. Digital platforms now serve as the primary means of producing, disseminating, and experiencing culture. "The processes through which culture has 'become' digital in the contemporary context have been a culmination of the various negotiations of the past", (Editorial, 2022, p. 783). Unlike traditional media, which provides limited content to a geographically limited audience, digital media allows cultural products – films, music, art, fashion, memes and stories – to reach a global audience instantly. This expansion has democratized cultural participation, allowing users to both consume and produce content. "People believed that there would not be another revolution that had the same influence on global society as the internet revolution, but social media propelled growth into a new era", (Bhandari, 2024, p. 126). Individuals can create and share videos, music, or digital art. They can interact with global audiences and participate in cultural dialogues that transcend national and social boundaries. The result is a global cultural ecosystem shaped by algorithmic recommendation systems, participatory engagement, and the viral circulation of content. Digital culture, in essence, is not confined to urban or elite spaces. But it spans multiple social layers, connecting local and global experiences.

The pattern of digital culture circulation reveals a complex mix of global influences and local adaptations. Data from secondary sources indicate that regions with high internet penetration and smartphone access show significantly greater engagement with global cultural productions. While communities with limited digital infrastructure selectively adapt to global trends. Local content is often mixed with global forms, creating hybrid expressions that resonate with domestic audiences. "They expose the tensions between the known and unfamiliar, offering critical insights into how identities are negotiated through intercultural contact", (Dewan, 2025, p. 76). This suggests that digital culture does not simply replicate global trends. It is transformed and reinterpreted in local contexts. Table 1 provides an overview of the growth of Internet and social media penetration across regions and its relationship to digital content engagement.

Table 1

Global Digital Culture Engagement (Selected Regions, 2010–2025)

Region	Internet penetration (%)	Social media users (millions)	Local vs. global content engagement
North America	92	320	60% global and 40% local
Europe	88	560	55% global and 45% local
South Asia	68	880	45 global and 55% local
East Asia	79	1,040	50% global and 50% local
Africa	43	520	35% global and 65% local

Global Influences on Local Cultures

Global cultural products such as Hollywood movies, K-pop music, Western fashion, and global digital trends are widely accessible in the digital space and influence cultural practices in society. "South Korean popular music (known colloquially as K-Pop) has experienced a meteoric rise in popularity in recent years", (Howard, 2012, p. 2). Secondary data indicates that global digital influence often sets aspirational trends. It shapes fashion choices, music preferences, social norms, and lifestyle practices. Even as global culture permeates local societies, it rarely erases indigenous culture. Instead, it interacts with local traditions, beliefs, and practices to create unique combinations. "It is a fluid and dynamic construct, evolving through interactions with diverse cultural contexts and experiences", (Mohyeddin, 2024, p. 106). For example, local filmmakers increasingly incorporate global cinematic techniques while telling culturally rooted stories. Similarly, youth communities blend global musical styles with traditional instruments and melodies to produce hybrid musical genres.

Global influence also further shapes social interactions, communication styles, and identity formation. Through digital platforms, individuals learn global social norms, cultural idioms, and digital etiquette. They often integrate them into their daily practices. However, the degree of adoption varies by social class, access to technology, and educational exposure. Urban, educated, and tech-savvy populations tend to adapt to global trends quickly. Rural and marginalized groups may engage selectively, blending global content with local practices. Table 2 highlights the differential adoption of global digital trends across demographic groups in South Asia, illustrating how access and social capital shape engagement with global culture.

Table 2

Adoption of Global Digital Trends in South Asia (2020–2025)

Demographic group	Urban	Rural	Yong adults (18-30)	Older adults (31-50)	Low-income households	High-income households
Engagement with global music (%)	82	45	90	55	40	88
Engagement with global fashion (%)	76	30	85	50	25	82
Participation global online trends (%)	80	35	88	48	30	85

Emergence of Cultural Hybridization

Another major consequence of digital globalization is cultural hybridization. That is, the blending of global and local cultural elements to create new forms of expression. Secondary sources show that hybridization occurs in many areas, including music, art, fashion, language, storytelling, and social rituals. For example, traditional art forms are increasingly reimagined through digital platforms. They are combined with global styles to appeal to a wider audience. Similarly, digital communication enables the emergence of hybrid language practices, blending local languages with English, emojis, and internet slang. These hybrid forms are not simply aesthetic. They carry social and cultural significance. They reflect the negotiation between global influences and local identities. "These digital forms add

multimodal and visual components that challenge and expand traditional linguistic frameworks in the ways that they express meaning", (Nagpal R. et. al., 2024, p. 576).

Hybridization reshapes social norms and collective identities. "Hacking identifies ten distinct processes that happen in chronological order once a new syndrome has been identified: counting, quantifying, creating norms, correlating, medicalizing, biologizing, geneticizing, normalizing, bureaucratizing, and, finally, reclaiming the identity", (Gellner, 2019, p. 268). Young people often construct hybrid identities by engaging simultaneously with local traditions and global digital culture. This creates a sense of belonging that spans multiple cultural spaces. However, hybridization is not uniform. It is shaped by social, economic, and technological inequalities. Groups with limited access to digital devices or exposure to global media may remain peripheral to the creation of hybrid cultures. While urban, affluent, and digitally literate populations dominate the production and dissemination of new cultural forms. Table 3 illustrates examples of hybrid cultural practices observed in South Asia and their relationship to local and global influences.

Table 3

Examples of Cultural Hybridization in Digital Spaces (South Asia)

Domain	Local tradition	Global influence	Hybrid form
Music	Folk melodies	K-pop, Hip-pop	Fusion tracks blending local instruments with rap or pop beats
Fashion	Traditional clothing	Western styles	Modernized ethnic wear combining global trends
Language	Regional languages	English and internet slang	Code-mixing in social media posts
Storytelling	Folklore and epics	Global narrative structures	Digital storytelling using cinematic techniques with local narratives

Discussion

Identity and Social Negotiation in Digital Spaces

Digital culture enables individuals to construct and negotiate their identities in new ways. "Platform-based models have decentralized the reciprocal employer-employee relationship by mediating production and services, with employers now often operated by impersonal algorithmic servers and multinational platform companies", (Magar, 2025, p. 56). Secondary research shows that online spaces allow users to experiment with identity, express personal preferences, and connect with both global and local communities. Young people in particular often navigate multiple cultural contexts. They create hybrid identities, reflecting both global aspirations and local affiliations. This identity work extends to gender expression, political affiliation, lifestyle choices, and cultural participation, making digital platforms a central arena for self-expression and community negotiation.

However, identity construction in digital culture is influenced by inequalities and structural barriers. Access to technology, digital literacy, and social media determine whose voices are heard and whose cultural expressions gain visibility. Marginalized groups can find digital spaces both empowering and limiting. They can gain recognition for unique cultural practices. But they can also face exclusion,

stereotyping, or cultural appropriation. As a result, digital culture is both a tool for inclusion and a site of contestation. In which individuals and communities negotiate social recognition, legitimacy, and belonging.

Power Dynamics and Digital Cultural Production

Digital platforms appear to have democratized cultural production. But the secondary literature emphasizes the persistence of power inequalities. Global technology corporations, algorithmic content mediation, and platform monetization shape what content is visible, widely distributed, or commercially successful. Cultural content produced by dominant groups, such as those who are typically urban, affluent, or globally connected, is more likely to reach large audiences. While marginalized cultural expressions remain peripheral. This dynamic reinforces structural inequalities and raises further questions about cultural agency in the digital age.

Despite these challenges, hybrid cultural practices demonstrate local agency in resisting, reshaping, and negotiating global cultural flows. Communities creatively adapt global elements to local contexts. They reinterpret dominant narratives and assert cultural meaning. Digital spaces therefore function as sites of both influence and resistance, illustrating that cultural hybridization is not imposed but actively negotiated. Recognizing these dynamics is essential to understanding how digital culture shapes social power, cultural visibility, and collective identity.

Socio-Economic Implications of Digital Cultural Engagement

Engagement with digital culture is clearly linked to socio-economic status. Secondary sources show that urban, educated and high-income groups have greater access to devices, stable internet and digital skills, which allows them to fully participate in global cultural flows. In contrast, rural, low-income and less educated populations often experience limited access, creating a digital divide that affects cultural exposure and participation. These divides have effects beyond culture, affecting education, social mobility and economic opportunity. Therefore, cultural hybridization is not only an aesthetic phenomenon but also a socio-economic one, reflecting and reinforcing existing inequalities.

At the same time, digital culture offers new economic opportunities through creative industries, content monetization, and cross-border engagement. Artists, musicians, designers, and influencers use digital platforms to reach global audiences, create hybrid products, and generate income. These economic dimensions highlight the intertwined nature of culture, technology, and development. This suggests that digital culture is a site of creative expression and economic transformation. Policies and interventions that promote equitable digital access can therefore enhance participation, inclusion, and cultural innovation.

Educational and Cultural Awareness Impacts

Digital culture also plays an important role in education and cultural awareness. Secondary studies indicate that online platforms facilitate learning, cultural exchange, and exposure to diverse perspectives. Users can access educational videos, online courses, digital archives, and virtual museums, which promote knowledge of global and local cultures alike. "They are commanding the attention of the broad public including empathizers, businesses, and governments around the world", (Magar, 2025, p. 108). Cultural hybridization in these places contributes to critical awareness, creativity, and intercultural understanding, especially among young people. However, scholars note

that exposure alone does not guarantee meaningful engagement. Digital literacy, critical thinking, and cultural sensitivity are essential to effectively navigate the complex interplay of local and global influences.

Furthermore, hybrid digital content often serves as a means of cultural preservation and revitalization. Folk songs, local storytelling, traditional dances, and indigenous crafts are increasingly digitized, reinterpreted, and shared online, reaching audiences far beyond their original communities. Digital culture thus acts as a bridge between heritage and modernity, ensuring that local knowledge and cultural identity are preserved in an era dominated by global influences. This dual function makes digital platforms a critical place for cultural sustainability as tools for learning and cultural continuity.

Implications for Policy and Social Practice

Evidence from secondary sources highlights the need for policies that address access, equity and sustainability in digital cultural engagement. Governments, educational institutions and civil society organizations should work to bridge the digital divide, ensuring that marginalized communities can participate in global digital culture. Supporting digital literacy, affordable internet access and culturally inclusive platforms can increase the creation and circulation of hybrid cultural forms. In addition, attention needs to be paid to ethical and legal dimensions, including copyright, representation and content mediation, to protect local and indigenous cultures in digital spaces. By promoting inclusive, equitable and responsible engagement with digital culture, societies can maximize the benefits of global cultural flows while preserving cultural diversity and creativity.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that digital culture has transformed the way societies experience, produce, and negotiate cultural meanings. Digital technologies have enabled global influences to flow rapidly across borders, while local actors reinterpret and adapt these influences. This has given rise to hybrid cultural forms. These hybrid practices are evident in music, fashion, language, storytelling, and identity construction, reflecting both continuity with tradition and openness to global trends. The research highlights that digital culture is not simply a tool for cultural consumption but is a dynamic space for creativity, negotiation, and social expression. However, participation in these processes is shaped by social, economic, and technological inequalities, meaning that access, visibility, and influence remain unevenly distributed.

The findings suggest that addressing these inequalities is essential to fostering inclusive and sustainable digital cultural spaces. Policies and interventions should focus on improving digital access, promoting digital literacy, and supporting platforms that value local culture while facilitating global exchange. Encouraging responsible and equitable participation can increase cultural hybridity in ways that strengthen identity, preserve heritage, and empower communities. Ultimately, digital culture represents both an opportunity and a challenge. A force that can connect people around the world and reshape cultural practices in complex, negotiated, and transformative ways.

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