

ANALYSIS OF GENERATION Z'S INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS VIA TIKTOK/INSTAGRAM: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This study examines the communication competencies and strategies of intercultural Generation Z on TikTok and Instagram through a qualitative netnography approach. Research results show the existence of dialectics between a logic-algorithmic platform that curates exposure culture and Gen Z users who form an *algorithmic imaginary*. By dramaturgical, Gen Z differentiates presentation self: TikTok is working as a room-experimentation culture, with low (low-stakes), with spontaneity structured as *spontaneity*. On the other hand, Instagram becomes an arena for high-stakes demands curation of global-local aesthetics, even though Gen Z is getting around it with secondary accounts (finsta) for more free expression. Interaction is coloured by the hybridization of linguistics and semiotics, including practices such as *translanguaging and Indoglish*, as well as the meanings of migration emojis. In the Islamic perspective, this cross-cultural phenomenon reflects draft *lita'arafu* (mutual knowledge). However, the implementation of digital demand *tabayyun and Islamic digital literacy-based muraqabah* as an internal filter against the negative impact of social media.

Keywords: Generation Z, intercultural communication, social media, hybridization culture, Islamic communication ethics

I. INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution over the past three decades has fundamentally changed the way humans interact and make sense of the world around them. If in the previous era, encounters with the intercultural required mobility, physical or direct contact, they are now blurred by geographical, national, and cultural boundaries in a connected digital space in an instant. Transformation ecosystem This gives birth to a new where someone can access content from various inner world count seconds, at once face risk of misunderstanding multimedia-rich messages context foreigners. Digital globalization brings a paradox to the surface: it makes it easier to encounter intercultural encounters in a democratic and massive way, but there is no set rule for understanding them.[1] Increasing connectedness widely. This is not always in line with the ability to understand each other, because the obstacles of digital communication are not just differences in language that can be translated, but rather differences in mentality, value structures, and ways of reading the world.

Landscape complex digital communications has become the primary mode of interaction for Generation Z, the demographic born between 1997 and 2012 who grew up as digital natives. Progress in technology make distance physical no longer an obstacle, at the same time giving birth to a phenomenon of communication that is actual, unique, and

dynamic intercultural. In the Indonesian context, Gen Z occupies a significant portion of the population, where internet and gadget characteristics have shaped communication and negotiation styles, and their identity is, in a way, different from that of previous generations. Through intensive digital exposure, Gen Z develops sensitivity to diverse cultures. Exposure, in a way, significantly increases awareness and intercultural communication, but it also brings significant challenges in avoiding cultural stereotypes and demands active involvement in cross-cultural discussion. [2]

Between various platforms, TikTok and Instagram emerged as two main communication platforms for Gen Z to express themselves, build digital identity, and obtain social validation.[3]. These two platforms have different architectures, characteristics, and logic, so they produce contrasting communication patterns. TikTok relies on a short-form video format that is concise, to the point, and offers nuances, raw and unfiltered, through features broadcast directly. Meanwhile, Instagram evolved into a complex multimedia ecosystem where users laugh at reality, express anxiety, and build solidarity through curated visual and verbal language.[4]. Interaction on these two platforms creates fluid and multimodal communication. No communication patterns can be understood only through the lens of text; they must also include analysis of the use of emojis to convey nuances and complex emotions, loaded memes and context, as well as

filters and music that evoke associations and cultural certainties.

This dynamic is complicated by the role of platform algorithms that implicitly adapt the timeline based on users' previous behaviour. The algorithm plays an active role in determining narrative decency to get public attention. These characteristics pave the way for creators from backgrounds that are not unexpected. It suddenly went viral across borders, but it also creates filter bubbles and echo chambers that inhibit cross-cultural understanding and genuine culture. In dramaturgical terms, Gen Z differentiates the presentation self they strategically use in both rooms. Instagram works as a curated frontstage, in a way, aesthetic for building an ideal, aspirational identity through global-local categories like clean girl, until adjustment to local ones like girl earth and mamba girl. On the other hand, TikTok works as a room show fluid and dynamic identity through editing rhythmic and involved audio trends that produce form-structured spontaneity. [5]

This hybrid condition imposes limitations when analyzed using a theoretical classic. Kim's Integrative Theory is indeed offering a broad description of the adaptation process, psychological and transformational cross-cultural; however, it is overwhelmed by a map meeting culture, random consequence, and algorithm. Hofstede's cultural dimensions model is invaluable for quantifying differences, such as individualism-collectivism; however, it is often criticized for assuming that national culture is static and homogeneous. [6]. Likewise, Gudykunst's AUM Theory focuses on the management of anxiety and uncertainty cognitive moments interacting with strangers; digital space, when this demand for reflexivity is difficult, is instantly accommodated by the traditional interaction model. [7]. Gen Z currently lives in a third space hybrid place with a combination of local and global elements, giving birth to a new formation culture that cannot be classified into a rigid national category. [8]

Phenomena like code-switching and code-mixing among digital Gen Z also go beyond traditional understandings of multilingualism. Using a mixed language of English, local dialects, regional and global digital slang, and meme vocabulary in a single sentence has become a common practice to overcome lexical emptiness at the time, thereby marking social status and affiliation groups. [9]. In addition, migration meaning is symbolic in emojis or in absurd humour trends like brainrot memes, creating room for communication in which a person only becomes an insider if they understand local context. This digital acculturation process is not passive or linear because Gen Z is actively selecting, modifying, and combining global elements to create a unique hybrid culture. For Gen Z in Indonesia, the challenge is layered because they must navigate identity in the digital space that is not only global in nature but also intranational in nature, involving ethnic diversity and hundreds of language areas. [10]. The communication process is also understood as the conveyance of information from one party to another, in which individuals, groups, organizations, and communities create and use information to connect with the surrounding environment. [11]

Comment columns often become rooms for meetings and negotiations, a mix of various dialects and digital slang. Methodologically, research on digital communication faces

massive temporal and multimodal challenges. [12]. Visual content, effects, transitions, and viral logic form cognition in a dynamic way and cannot be reduced to analysis of static content or conventional interviews alone. Currently, the study is holistic and integrates four main dimensions: language, digital culture, identity, and communication competence. [13]. Regarding Gen Z's intercultural interactions on TikTok and Instagram, cross-platform engagement remains very limited. The gap between the theoretical and the methodological is the basis for this study's urgency.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, specifically netnography, to observe digital space in a participatory way through an account-based study. Over six months, researchers observed account creators and users from Generation Z across various backgrounds and cultures (such as Indonesia, South Korea, the United States, Brazil, and Nigeria) on TikTok and Instagram. Observation done at least two hours per day for catch dynamics interactions in the column comments, videos, *live streaming* and *stories*.

Data collection combines three mains. First, the collection of digital archives in the form of screenshots and downloaded content, such as videos, memes, comments, emojis, and hashtag interactions, cross-culture. Second, the interview is in-depth, semi-structured, 45–90 minutes long, conducted via Zoom, Google Meet, or *voice note*, with 30 informants (age 14–27 years). Informant chosen using *purposive snowball sampling* with criteria: active on social media at least 4 hours per day and experienced interacting with at least three different cultures. Third, filling a *digital diary* for two weeks by the informant to take notes on interactions, emotional reactions, communication strategies, and the barriers they face in real time.

Data analysis employs a thematic, integrated, and interactive approach using multimodal analysis with NVivo 14. Stage analysis started with data reconciliation (*familiarization*), continued with *open coding* to identify specific units of meaning, and ended with *axial coding* to group codes into strategic categories. Next, do *thematic mapping* of the main map pattern and *cross-platform comparison* to systematically compare the characteristics of TikTok and Instagram. Special video content and *reels*, multimodal analysis using Kress and van Leeuwen's skeleton for dissection: synergy of visual elements, gestures, music, and text on screen. Data validity is maintained strictly through triangulation of sources, triangulation of researchers via independent coding, and *member checking*. All of this research committed full-on code ethics online research, including implementation, data anonymization and informed consent agreement.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dialectics between Algorithms: Platform Logics and Practices Communication Intercultural Gen Z

Communication studies of intercultural classics often ignore the role of technology in curating human interaction.

In today's digital reality, this pattern of cross-cultural communication among Generation Z is not only shaped by differences in social values and norms but is also largely governed by algorithmic logic.[10]. Social media-based intelligence utilises AI recommendations to sort and prioritise content, shaping the user's online experience. When a teenager in Jakarta accesses his *For You Page* (FYP), he is in a room that has been curated by a system biased towards content developers' emotions, short-form video formats, and global culture. Before Gen Z chooses subject interactions, algorithms have decided which culture they meet. The phenomenon in Indonesia shows that algorithms play a significant role in increasing Gen Z's exposure to global culture (such as Korea and Japan), which then forms a reference framework for thinking they have since beginning.

However, considering the connection, this nature is deterministic. Gen Z has *algorithmic imaginary* — the way they think and respond to work algorithms in daily life. This agency form comes true in practice, tactically every day: on purpose, use alternative hashtags against bias, suppress knob *dislike* or *not interested* in the content, stereotypical, and build "cross-network " manually to practice the algorithm to present more diverse content.[14]. TikTok users even build *user-AI synergy* by utilising agency machines to increase involvement. This awareness algorithmic develops from meeting affective pre-reflective theories, *folk* practical guides, and actions through an *active curation* process.

The most obvious manifestation of this dialectic is *code-switching* and *translanguaging* across platforms. Research shows that the use of social media changes how Gen Z communicates, with translanguaging components dominated by transfer code (*code-switching*) for the sake of discussing certain topics. [15]. This Agency linguistics is customized to the characteristics (*affordances*) of each platform. On Instagram, which prioritizes an interaction-based, network-stable social, transfer code used as a marker of identity, verified, cosmopolitan community real. On TikTok, people who appreciate visual and emotional activity are more dependent on images, sound, and movement for communicating identity across cultures. Gen Z even fluently uses metaphorically technical terms such as "*pipelining* ", "*the algorithm* ", and "*the SEO* " to express their digital subculture.

Thus, we may ignore the structural power embedded in the asymmetric platform architecture. System algorithms are often criticized because they affect discrimination, which triggers " digital colonialism ", where content from the global South is often disadvantaged by automatic moderation. [16]. System recommendation, in a way, structurally strengthens ideological homogeneity through *filter bubbles* and *echo chambers*. This limits diverse perspectives and inhibits the development of authentic cultural expressions from developing countries.

Therefore, education and intercultural communication in the digital era are mandatory, equipping Gen Z with *algorithmic literacy* (algorithm literacy) so they can critique systemic bias in recommendations. In theoretical and factual terms, this demand-expansion framework is classic—like Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions or Kim's Adaptation Theory.

Variables of *algorithmic agency* must be entered as a mediator. When Gen Z from a *high-context culture* (Indonesia) interacts with a *low-context culture* (United States) on TikTok, the differences they encounter do not directly collide in an empty room but are mediated, cut, or precisely exaggerated by platform logic.

TikTok as a Low-Stakes Space for Experimentation Culture vs. Instagram as a High-Stakes Arena for Identity Negotiation

Social capital structures and risk differences between TikTok and Instagram also shape Gen Z's willingness to learn about foreign cultures. In psychology, social and environmental *low-stakes* (risky) low-stakes (no punishment, social consequence, failure), so that support experimentation and methods of *trial and error*. [17]. On the other hand, the environment is *high-stakes* (risky) and demands high performance, and is subject to rigid norms because it leads to a real decline in social capital. Gen Z views TikTok as a place to express fluid authenticity, whereas Instagram is seen as a *curated gallery* where authenticity must be packaged within a stunning aesthetic.

This fundamental difference is demonstrated in a dramaturgical way. Instagram works as a *frontstage* for front visuals that facilitate the construction of identity, stable and ideal-aspirational through global-local trends like *clean girl*, *earth girl*, or *mamba girl*. On the other hand, TikTok has become a room showing a dynamic, expressive, and adaptive identity shaped by editing rhythmic and viral audio trends that generate *structured spontaneity*. [5]

As room experimentation culture is risky and low, the majority of the top creators Gen Z follows on TikTok are in the pure entertainment industry. This makes TikTok a *safe file environment*. Indonesian teenagers can try to dance to K-Pop choreography or recite a foreign language with an accent, as if they were not afraid of losing their digital reputation. [18]. Mistakes in pronunciation or movement are precisely considered aesthetically enjoyable humour in the community. In this room, anxiety, communication, and intercultural *communication* apprehension can be pushed to an optimal level for pushing exploration.

At the poles, in other words, Instagram has become an arena for identity negotiation. Gen Z's use of Instagram is more centered on curated visual content, such as fashion and beauty. The phenomenon of *digital colonization* shows a preference for global algorithms over Western aesthetics, which forces users from non-Western countries to change or reduce their local cultural expressions to broaden the range of content. [19]. This pressure triggers identity dissonance and emotional pressure. Gen Z's response to ingenuity in managing risk. This is with a second account (create *account* or *finsta*). The secondary account functions as a *backstage* behind the main persona, deliberately created to avoid the constraints of the normative main persona and to express opinions, emotions, and a lifestyle marginalized in a freer way through *contextual self-disclosure*. [20]

These two platforms follow different paths toward *Intercultural Digital Competence* (IDC). TikTok helps reduce desensitization to cultural differences in style and language, as well as asby providing real-time data on successful

communication through *micro-feedback loops* (comments, likes, duets). [21]. Instagram provides room for the negotiation of identity in deep ways that require consistency in term length, where the marker culture and image-symbolic blend form a *hybrid digital selfhood*.

Different ethos audiences emphasize contrast: TikTok appreciates content raw and positions users as active participants, triggering fast discussion in the column comments. Instagram demands a polished production and places users as more passive viewers who choose to share content in a private way via *Direct Message* (DM). [22] As a result, the bait coming back across cultures on Instagram is often delayed, increasing the risk of damaging the reputation before the error is realized.

However, research about *IYKYK: Gen Z Intercultural Competence vs Social Media* has shown that Gen Z demonstrates competence like valuing human rights and basic human rights, civil consciousness, empathy, and critical knowledge and understanding of the world, highly relevant competencies for communication between cultures. [23] In a pedagogical way, educators can use TikTok as a laboratory experiment within a safe culture and Instagram as a repository for project curation and identity culture in the long term.

Hybridization Cross- Cultural Linguistics and Semiotics as a Navigation Strategy Global-Local Identity

Gen Z's intercultural communication is characterized by hybridization and complex linguistic and semiotic phenomena. It combines various kinds of verbal language with rich *multimodal resources*, such as emojis, memes, filters, music, and text screens, to convey a hybrid message. This practice of translanguaging pragmatically not only involves overcoding language but also integrates visual elements to strengthen identity on social media. Perspective: This aligns with the draft *third space* (space third) by Homi K. Bhabha, namely, a liminal space where cultural identity is negotiated in a liquid way, beyond the binary opposition between "local" and "global" culture. [24]

One of the forms of hybridization is a shift in cross-cultural meaning and generations. In the hands of Gen Z, emojis are experiencing a 'migration' of the meaning of 'extreme', which is often ironic and contradictory with design literally. Meaningful "👍" thumbs up emoji is positive for the older generation, meaning as an attitude, passive-aggressive or cold by Gen Z. [25]. The skull emoji "💀" transforms become the laughing out loud (*I'm dead*) sign, and the water drop emoji "💧" shifting from sweat marker become desire connotation in informal chat. Understanding how to change this visual dictionary becomes a form of symbolic skill, in which failed communication no longer occurs only in intercultural national settings but also in intergenerational and platform subcultures.

The practice of code-switching and code-mixing has also become a performative strategy for indicating social status and membership in social groups. [26]. In Indonesia, this phenomenon gives rise to *Indoglish* (a mixture of Indonesian and English) and is used strategically on TikTok and Instagram to convey emotions, strengthen meaning, and mark gender-specific social identity. [27]. Women tend to use overcode with an expressive-affective style, while men use it for delivering a message assertively or humorously. Through

this phenomenon, creator content employs a "glocalization" strategy that combines authenticity, performativity, and adaptive communication, balancing authentic local culture with current algorithmic global culture. Ultimately, the pattern hybridization shows that, in the digital era, intercultural competence is measured by the ability to dynamically combine code linguistics and semiotics.

Ethics and Communication Patterns Intercultural Generation Z on Social Media in Islamic Perspective

Interaction across cultures by Generation Z through platforms like TikTok and Instagram is not just a sociological-technological trend but rather a new reality closely intertwined with theological and ethical Islamic communication. In Islamic teachings, the diversity of languages and cultures is *sunnatullah* and noble, as outlined in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13: draft each other to know (*lita'arafu*). In the digital era, the activity Generation Z crossing geographical boundaries for collaborate and build the global community is modern form of draft mentioned, where the ideal *ta'aruf* is not limited to introduction formal identity, but rather a reciprocal process for understand uniqueness culture others, adopt mark goodness (*al- ma'ruf*), as well as create welfare in space cyber. [28] (2020).

However, freedom on social media is unlimited. This visual-based approach also triggers dualism, clashing ethics with *good morals*, because the communication pattern Generation Z tends to use is instant, impulsive, and short-term; being visual-based, it often overlooks aspects of caution. Plus, with social media algorithms that chase virality, users are prone to being trapped in a vortex of hoaxes, digital gossip (*ghibah*), and cyberbullying. Facing this challenge, Islam provides a preventive solution through the principle of *tabayyun* (verification) of information before spreading or responding to news, in accordance with the message of QS. In Al-Hujurat verse 6, emphasizes that implementing digital *tabayyun*, as well as *qaulan sadida* (true and honest speech), is a foundational principle for young Muslims to avoid slander, prejudice, and social division. [29] (2021).

Massive assimilation global culture on social media often trap the Generation Z in hunting validation social by numbers *likes* and *followers*, which trigger excess negative like behavior showing off (*riya*), neglect limitation genitals for the sake of aesthetics, until normalization style life hedonistic. In contemporary jurisprudence, social media is a means (*al-usya*) defined by its purpose and impact (*al-usya bi maqasidaha*). the need for the reconstruction of spiritual awareness (feeling always supervised by Allah SWT). Awareness theological this is what gave birth to Islamic *digital literacy* as a strong internal filter for sorting useful trends for their spirituality at a time guard honor self (*iffah*) as a Muslim. [30] (2023)

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Communication with Generation Z in the digital era is a dynamic process that bridges the local and the global through a fluid hybrid culture. Their communication patterns are not linear, but mediated by platform architecture that

differentiates TikTok as a laboratory for experimental, safe culture and Instagram as a receptacle for project curation and identity formation. Amid algorithmic polarization, multilingual obstacles, and the search for social validation, Gen Z shows strong agency through algorithmic literacy and new symbolic skills. Thus, if global interaction still brings welfare and integration, Islamic communication principles—such as tabayyun, honest speech (qaulan sadida), and spiritual awareness—are crucial for guarding one's honor in cyberspace.

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