

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY REPRESENTATION, ALGORITHMIC CULTURE, AND DIGITAL COMMODIFICATION IN INDONESIAN TIKTOK CONTENT: A FAIRCLOUGH APPROACH

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ABSTRACT This study aims to examine how cultural identity is represented, negotiated, and commodified in Indonesian TikTok content within an algorithm-driven digital environment. TikTok has emerged as a dominant platform where cultural identity is constructed and circulated through short-form audiovisual content. While previous studies have explored cultural identity and digital discourse, limited research integrates these discussions with algorithmic culture and digital commodification, particularly in the Indonesian context. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. A total of 30 TikTok videos were selected through purposive sampling from an initial dataset of 120 videos. The data include verbal expressions, captions, hashtags, visual elements, and audience comments, which were analyzed across textual, discursive, and social dimensions. The findings reveal that cultural identity on TikTok is constructed through recurring linguistic and visual patterns, including identity markers, local language expressions, and cultural symbols. At the discursive level, creators adapt cultural content to platform conventions, audience engagement, and visibility strategies, resulting in hybrid forms of representation. At the social level, cultural identity functions both as a marker of belonging and as a commodified digital resource within the attention economy. The study further demonstrates that authenticity, hybridization, and commodification operate as interconnected processes rather than separate categories, forming a continuum of cultural representation in digital environments. This study contributes to digital discourse and cultural identity research by integrating CDA with platform dynamics and providing empirical evidence from Indonesian TikTok content.

Keywords: algorithmic culture, Critical Discourse Analysis, cultural identity, digital commodification, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the way individuals construct, express, and represent cultural identity. Digital media is no longer merely a tool for communication but has evolved into a social space where meanings are continuously produced and reproduced. In this context, TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential platforms, enabling users to create and disseminate short-form video content that is highly visual, interactive, and algorithm-driven (Kaye et al., 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). As a platform predominantly used by younger generations, TikTok serves as a strategic space for the construction of cultural identity. Users are not only passive consumers but also active producers who represent culture through language, symbols, visual styles, and social practices embedded in their content. These representations are not neutral; rather, they are socially constructed and influenced by ideology, power relations, and specific interests (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Fairclough, 2015). However, previous discussions on digital cultural identity often present overlapping explanations regarding identity construction, digital discourse, and algorithmic influence, resulting in conceptual repetition without clearly integrating these elements into a unified analytical framework.

In the era of digital globalization, cultural identity is increasingly dynamic and fluid. Social media facilitates rapid cultural exchange, but it also risks cultural homogenization and commodification. Previous studies indicate that digital platforms tend to simplify complex cultural elements into easily consumable symbols, often leading to stereotypical representations (Abidin, 2021; Anderson, 2021). As a result, cultural identity presented in digital media may not fully reflect its original context but rather a reconstructed version shaped by digital trends. This phenomenon is further intensified by the role of algorithms in determining content visibility. TikTok's algorithm prioritizes engaging and attention-grabbing content, encouraging repetitive patterns of representation. This process leads to what is referred

to as “imitation publics,” where users collectively reproduce and circulate similar forms of content (Zulli & Zulli, 2020). Consequently, cultural representations in digital media do not merely reflect reality but actively participate in shaping new social realities (Montag et al., 2021).

In a multicultural country like Indonesia, where cultural diversity is highly significant, the representation of cultural identity in digital media becomes a crucial issue. On one hand, social media can function as a medium for cultural preservation; on the other hand, it may also result in the distortion of cultural meanings due to simplification and commercialization processes. Studies show that young people use digital platforms to express their cultural identity; however, such expressions are often influenced by global trends and popularity-driven mechanisms (Supriadi, et al., 2024; Rusida, 2024). Moreover, cultural identity in digital media is closely related to the construction of social identity. Social media plays an essential role in shaping self-perception and collective identity through continuous symbolic interactions (Yang & Fatimah, 2024). In this regard, digital discourse becomes a site of contestation where dominant ideologies and user resistance interact in shaping cultural identity (Agyo, 2026)

To critically examine this phenomenon, an approach that reveals the relationship between language, power, and ideology is required. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the model developed by Norman Fairclough, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing discourse through three dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 2015). This approach enables researchers to investigate not only the linguistic features of digital content but also the processes of production, distribution, and interpretation within specific social contexts.

Despite the growing body of research on digital discourse, limited studies explicitly examine how cultural identity representation is interconnected with algorithmic culture and digital commodification, particularly in the Indonesian TikTok context. Previous studies have demonstrated that CDA is an effective tool for analyzing digital media discourse. However, studies specifically focusing on the representation of cultural identity in TikTok content using Fairclough’s CDA model remain limited, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Furthermore, although Critical Discourse Analysis has been widely applied to digital media research, many studies emphasize textual interpretation without sufficiently connecting textual features to content circulation mechanisms, audience interaction, and broader social structures. As a result, the influence of algorithmic systems on the construction and commodification of cultural identity remains underexplored. This limitation is particularly evident in the Indonesian context, where cultural diversity provides a unique environment in which local traditions interact with global digital culture (Harrison, 2023). Therefore, a more comprehensive investigation is needed to understand how cultural identity is represented, negotiated, and transformed through the interaction of textual features, discursive practices, and social practices in Indonesian TikTok content. Addressing this issue contributes not only to discourse studies but also to broader discussions on digital culture, identity formation, and algorithm-mediated communication (Bishop, 2022; Cotter, 2019).

The novelty of this study lies not only in applying Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis to TikTok content but also in examining the interaction between cultural identity representation and platform-specific algorithmic practices within the Indonesian digital context. Therefore, this study aims to explicitly investigate the representation of cultural identity in Indonesian TikTok content by integrating textual analysis, discursive practices, and broader socio-cultural processes influenced by platform dynamics. By integrating textual analysis with the investigation of content circulation, audience engagement, and broader socio-cultural implications, this study extends existing CDA research beyond linguistic interpretation toward a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity is reconstructed, negotiated, and commodified in algorithm-driven digital environments. Furthermore, the study contributes empirical evidence from Indonesian TikTok content, a context that remains underrepresented in current digital discourse and cultural identity studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Identity in Digital Media

Cultural identity is a dynamic and socially constructed concept that continuously evolves across time and context. In contemporary digital environments, identity is no longer shaped solely by traditional cultural structures such as family, community, and nation, but also by digital interactions and media representation. According to Hall (1990), cultural identity is not a fixed essence but a “production” that is always in process, shaped through representation and discourse./ This perspective becomes increasingly relevant in the digital era, where identity is constructed through mediated communication (Anderson, 2021; Kaye, et al., 2021).

Recent studies highlight that digital platforms play a significant role in shaping cultural identity through visibility, circulation, and algorithmic mediation (Machin & Mayr, 2025). Digital media environments reconstruct social reality by influencing how individuals perceive and represent themselves (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Similarly, Striphas (2015) argues that social media platforms are not neutral spaces but are structured by algorithmic and economic logics.

In the context of TikTok, cultural identity is often expressed through short-form audiovisual content that combines language, music, and visual symbols. Research shows that content creators actively shape cultural narratives, often blending authenticity with performativity (Abidin, 2023) shows that influencers and content creators actively shape cultural narratives, often blending authenticity with performativity. However, such representations are frequently simplified to meet audience expectations and platform trends, leading to what scholars describe as “algorithmic identity,” where identity is shaped by visibility and engagement metrics (Bishop, 2022; Cotter, 2019). Thus, cultural identity in digital media is not only expressive but also strategic, as creators adapt their representation to align with platform visibility mechanisms (Machin & Mayr, 2025).

Representation and Discourse in Social Media

Representation is central to understanding how meaning is constructed in media. (Hall, 1997) argues that representation is not merely a reflection of reality but an active process of meaning-making through language and symbols. In digital contexts, representation becomes increasingly multimodal, involving the integration of text, visuals, sound, and interaction (Grzenkiewicz & Wildfeuer, 2025). This complexity is particularly evident in TikTok, where meaning is constructed through short-form audiovisual narratives.

Social media platforms enable users to produce and circulate representations rapidly. TikTok fosters participatory culture, where users actively engage in content creation and reinterpretation (Kaye et al., 2021), TikTok fosters participatory culture, where users actively engage in content creation and reinterpretation. This aligns with (Jenkins, 2006) concept of participatory culture, where audiences are no longer passive but become co-creators of meaning.

However, representation in social media is deeply influenced by platform structures. The concept of “imitation publics” explains how users replicate trending formats, leading to repetitive and homogenized representations (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) introduce the concept of “imitation publics,” where users replicate trending content formats, leading to repetitive and homogenized representations. This phenomenon suggests that representation on TikTok is shaped not only by individual creativity but also by collective digital practices.

Furthermore, algorithm-driven systems prioritize engaging and visually appealing content, often simplifying complex cultural meanings into easily consumable symbols. As a result, cultural identity may be reduced to stereotypical representations (Montag et al., 2021). This suggests that representation on TikTok is shaped by the interaction between individual creativity, audience expectations, and platform algorithms. This study contributes to the discussion by critically examining how representation in TikTok content constructs cultural identity through both linguistic and visual elements, while also considering the influence of platform dynamics.

Critical Discourse Analysis and Fairclough's Model

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology. According to (Fairclough, 2015) discourse is a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes social reality. Fairclough conceptualizes discourse through three interrelated dimensions: text, discursive practice, and social practice. At the textual level, analysis focuses on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical structures. At the level of discursive practice, it examines the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. At the social level, it explores broader socio-cultural contexts, including power relations and ideological structures. This three-dimensional framework is particularly relevant for analyzing digital media because it allows researchers to connect micro-level textual features with macro-level social processes.

Fairclough's model has been widely applied in media studies to uncover hidden meanings and power dynamics in discourse. According to Wodak and Meyer (2016), CDA has been widely applied in media studies to uncover hidden meanings and power dynamics. It is particularly useful in analyzing contemporary media because it reveals how discourse is embedded in social and political contexts. Rogers (2011) emphasizes that CDA enables researchers to critically examine how language constructs social identities and inequalities.

Recent studies have applied CDA to digital media contexts. Lin (2023) and Angelina (2026) demonstrate that CDA can effectively uncover ideological patterns in social media discourse. However, research specifically applying Fairclough's model to TikTok content remains limited, particularly in the context of cultural identity representation. However, many CDA studies focus primarily on textual interpretation and pay limited attention to platform dynamics such as algorithmic visibility and content circulation. Therefore, integrating CDA with digital platform analysis is necessary to better understand how discourse operates in algorithm-driven environments.

Algorithmic Culture and Digital Commodification

The concept of algorithmic culture is increasingly important in digital media studies. Algorithmic systems determine what content becomes visible, shaping user behavior and cultural representation. Algorithmic culture refers to the ways algorithms influence cultural production, distribution, and consumption (Striphas, 2015). On TikTok, algorithms play a crucial role in content distribution. (Zulli, & Zulli, 2020) argue that TikTok's "For You Page" creates a feedback loop where popular content is continuously amplified. This leads to standardized forms of content production, where creators adapt their content to align with algorithmic preferences. As a result, creators tend to adapt their content to align with algorithmic preferences, leading to standardized and repetitive forms of cultural representation.

In addition, digital media is closely linked to the commodification of culture. Cultural elements are often transformed into marketable content to maximize engagement and visibility (Abidin, 2021) highlight that cultural elements are often transformed into marketable content to maximize engagement and monetization. This process can lead to the simplification and commercialization of cultural identity.

Digital platforms operate within an attention economy, where cultural identity becomes a resource that can generate views, likes, and shares (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Further argue that digital platforms operate within an economic logic that prioritizes visibility and engagement, often at the expense of authenticity. As a result, cultural identity becomes part of the digital economy, where value is determined by metrics such as views, likes, and shares. This study contributes to this body of literature by examining how algorithmic systems and digital commodification influence the representation of cultural identity in TikTok content.

Conceptual Framework

The concepts discussed above are closely interconnected. Cultural identity is constructed and expressed through representation, while representation itself is shaped by

discourse operating within digital media environments. In TikTok, discourse is not produced solely by content creators but is also influenced by algorithmic systems that determine content visibility and circulation. At the textual level, cultural identity is expressed through language and visual symbols. At the discursive level, it is shaped by production and interaction processes. At the social level, it is influenced by broader structures such as globalization and digital commodification. Consequently, cultural identity is continuously negotiated through interactions among linguistic choices, visual symbols, audience engagement, and platform mechanisms.

Furthermore, the commodification of culture transforms cultural expressions into digital resources that can generate visibility, popularity, and economic value. Therefore, understanding cultural identity representation on TikTok requires an analytical framework capable of connecting textual features, content production processes, and broader socio-cultural structures. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis provides such a framework by linking discourse to power relations, ideology, and social practices. Thus, cultural identity on TikTok is not only represented but also commodified, functioning as both symbolic expression and digital capital. By integrating these dimensions, this study develops a more comprehensive framework that connects discourse, technology, and culture in the analysis of TikTok content.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Several studies have explored cultural identity in digital media. Abidin (2021) examines how influencers shape cultural narratives on social media, while Anderson (2021) discusses the role of digital platforms in shaping identity through algorithmic systems. In the Indonesian context, Supriadi et al. (2023) and Rosalina et al. (2025) highlight how young people use social media to express cultural identity, often influenced by global trends. However, several limitations remain: First, many studies focus on identity expression without critically analyzing discourse construction. Second, studies on TikTok often emphasize trends and engagement rather than discourse and ideology. Third, limited research integrates CDA with algorithmic culture and digital commodification. Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by combining Fairclough's CDA with the analysis of algorithmic visibility and cultural commodification in Indonesian TikTok content. This integration provides a more holistic understanding of how cultural identity is represented, negotiated, and transformed in digital environments.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary analytical framework. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore how cultural identity is represented, negotiated, and reconstructed within Indonesian TikTok content. Fairclough's three-dimensional model was adopted to examine discourse at the levels of text, discursive practice, and social practice. Through this framework, the study investigated not only linguistic and visual representations but also the processes of content production, circulation, and broader socio-cultural influences shaping digital discourse. A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth interpretation of meanings, enabling the researcher to examine implicit ideologies and socio-cultural contexts that shape digital discourse (Rogers, 2011; Ruth Wodak & Meyer, 2016)

Data Source and Sampling Strategy

The data consisted of 30 Indonesian TikTok videos containing explicit representations of cultural identity. The videos were selected from public TikTok accounts between January 2023 and December 2025. The unit of analysis included: verbal expressions (spoken language), captions, hashtags, visual symbols, traditional clothing, cultural practices, and local language

usage. The videos were uploaded by Indonesian content creators whose content focused on cultural themes such as traditional ceremonies, local customs, traditional arts, regional languages, traditional food, and cultural festivals. The duration of the selected videos ranged from 30 seconds to 3 minutes.

Purposive sampling was employed using the following criteria: a) the video was created by an Indonesian content creator; b) the content explicitly represented Indonesian cultural identity; c) the video received substantial audience engagement (more than 10,000 views); d) the video contained verbal and visual elements suitable for CDA analysis; e) the video was publicly accessible during the data collection period. From an initial dataset of approximately 120 videos, 30 videos were selected by which the selection process ensured variation across cultural themes, including traditional clothing, regional languages, culinary practices, rituals, and cultural festivals. In addition, efforts were made to include content representing different Indonesian regions to avoid overrepresentation of specific cultural groups.

The observation sheet included a) text-level (vocabulary, lexical choices, local language expressions, captions, hashtags, visual symbols; b) discursive practice level (content production strategies, audience interaction, comment patterns, sharing practices, algorithm-related features; and c) social practice level cultural values, identity construction, globalization, cultural hybridity, and commodification.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through four systematic stages to ensure the relevance and reliability of the dataset. First, relevant TikTok videos were identified using keywords such as Indonesian culture, traditional culture, local wisdom, regional language, and cultural heritage. These keywords were used to locate public TikTok content that explicitly or implicitly represented cultural expressions within the Indonesian context. Second, the videos were screened based on the sampling criteria. Only videos created by Indonesian content creators, containing clear representations of cultural identity, demonstrating significant audience engagement, and remaining publicly accessible during the research period were included in the final dataset. Videos that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the analysis. Third, selected videos were documented and archived, including metadata such as upload date, creator account, duration, views, likes, comments, captions, and hashtags. Fourth, all verbal and visual data were transcribed. This included spoken language, captions, hashtags, and on-screen text, as well as visual elements such as traditional clothing, cultural symbols, gestures, and settings (Jewitt, 2014). All Indonesian-language data excerpts were translated into English to ensure accessibility for an international readership while maintaining semantic accuracy.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, which consists of text analysis, discursive practice analysis, and social practice analysis. This framework was selected because it enables a comprehensive examination of how cultural identity is represented, produced, and interpreted within digital media environments. The analysis was conducted through four systematic stages. Data analysis was conducted in four stages. First, relevant TikTok videos were identified using keywords such as Indonesian culture, traditional culture, local wisdom, regional language, and cultural heritage.

The data were analyzed using Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework: a) text analysis (focusing on linguistic and visual features, including vocabulary, local expressions, code-mixing, captions, hashtags, and visual symbols); b) discursive practice analysis (examining how content was produced, distributed, and consumed, including content strategies, audience interaction, comment patterns, and engagement mechanisms); and c) social practice analysis (interpreting findings within broader socio-cultural contexts, including globalization, cultural hybridity, and digital commodification).

A thematic coding process was applied across these three stages to identify recurring patterns. Themes such as cultural authenticity, hybridization, and commodification emerged from repeated patterns across the dataset rather than isolated examples.

Trustworthiness and Reliability

To ensure the quality and credibility of the findings, several strategies were applied. Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data and repeated observation of the selected videos, and transferability was ensured by providing detailed descriptions of the dataset, sampling criteria, and analytical procedures. Dependability was maintained through a systematic and transparent research process, and confirmability was ensured by grounding interpretations in the data rather than personal assumptions. Inter-coder reliability was achieved through a second coder independently analyzing 20% of the dataset using the same coding framework to reduce subjectivity. The results showed a high level of agreement in identifying key themes and discourse patterns. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. This procedure strengthens the analytical rigor and addresses potential bias in qualitative interpretation, which is a common concern in Critical Discourse Analysis studies. Overall, this structured methodological approach enhances transparency, replicability, and analytical clarity, making it easier for readers to understand how the data were collected, selected, and analyzed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion based on the three-dimensional framework of Norman Fairclough, which includes text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. The analysis focuses on selected TikTok videos that represent Indonesian cultural identity.

Findings

The dataset consisted of 30 TikTok videos selected from an initial pool of approximately 120 videos. The selected videos represent diverse cultural themes, including traditional ceremonies, regional languages, traditional dances, culinary practices, and cultural festivals. To ensure representativeness, the dataset includes content from different Indonesian cultural regions and creators with varying audience reach.

The total duration of the dataset was approximately 75 minutes, with each video ranging from 30 seconds to 3 minutes. In addition to video content, the dataset included captions, hashtags, and 450+ audience comments, which were analyzed to identify recurring discursive patterns (Li & Liang, 2025; Setiadi, 2026). To enrich the analysis, additional samples of TikTok content are included to illustrate how cultural identity is dynamically constructed across different forms of digital expression.

Textual Analysis: Linguistics and Semiotics Features

The textual analysis reveals that cultural identity is constructed through recurring linguistic and visual patterns across the dataset. Across the 30 videos, three dominant linguistic patterns were identified: the use of identity markers appears in approximately 70% of videos; b) the use of local language expressions in around 60% of videos; and c) the use of cultural hashtags in over 80% of videos.

Lexical Choices and Thematic Framing of Cultural Identity

The lexical item *bangga* (proud) functions as a strong identity marker, while *budaya kita* constructs collective belonging. A prominent example from the dataset states:

"Bangga jadi anak Melayu, budaya kita harus tetap hidup."

("Proud to be Malay, our culture must live on.")

Similar expressions were found repeatedly across the dataset, indicating that cultural pride is a dominant discourse rather than an isolated example. Another recurring pattern is code-mixing:

"Tradisional tapi tetap kekinian."

("Traditional but still modern.")

This pattern appeared in more than half of the videos, suggesting that creators consistently frame cultural identity as both traditional and contemporary. Local language usage also plays a significant role in establishing authority:

"Horas! Jangan lupa bahasa Batak kita."

("Horas! Don't forget our Batak language.")

The use of greetings such as *"Horas," "Salam budaya,"* and other regional expressions appeared in multiple videos, reinforcing authenticity and ethnic identity.

Multimodal Representations (Visuals, Audio, and Textual Interplay)

Visual patterns further strengthen this representation. Across the dataset, more than 75% of videos included traditional clothing, while over 60% featured cultural performances or artifacts. However, these traditional elements were consistently combined with modern editing styles, trending music, and short-form storytelling techniques, indicating adaptation to platform norms.

Discursive Practice: Text Production and Consumption

At the discursive level, cultural identity is constructed through content production, circulation, and audience interaction.

Three recurring patterns were identified: adaptation to TikTok trends (observed in most videos), use of engagement strategies such as hashtags and calls to action, and active audience participation through comments and sharing.

Intertextuality: Blending Traditional Culture with Digital Trends

Creators frequently adapted cultural content to align with platform trends, including trending audio, transitions, and visual effects. This blending of historical cultural practices with fast-paced digital formats shows how traditional discourses are recontextualized to fit modern media consumption.

Algorithmic Curation: Adapting Cultural Expressions for the 'For You Page' (FYP)

Across the dataset, more than 80% of videos used trending hashtags such as #fyp, #viral, and #indonesiaculture, indicating strategic alignment with platform visibility mechanisms. Although high engagement levels suggest the role of platform visibility, this study does not claim direct access to TikTok's algorithmic system. Instead, the analysis focuses on observable patterns of content adaptation and audience interaction.

Audience Engagement: The Role of Comments and Shares in Shaping Meaning

Audience participation also plays a significant role in text consumption and meaning-making. Examples of highly repeated viewer commentary include:

Comment 1: "Saya jadi rindu kampung setelah lihat video ini."

("I miss my hometown after watching this video.")

Comment 2: "Bangga punya budaya seperti ini."

("Proud to have a culture like this.")

These types of comments appeared repeatedly across the dataset, demonstrating that audiences actively engage in reinforcing cultural meanings. Out of the 450+ comments analyzed, a large proportion expressed nostalgia, pride, and emotional attachment to cultural identity. This indicates that discourse is co-constructed between creators and audiences rather

than produced unilaterally. Although high engagement levels suggest the role of platform visibility, this study does not claim direct access to TikTok's algorithmic system. Instead, the analysis focuses on observable patterns of content adaptation and audience interaction.

Social Practice Level: Ideological and Power Implications

At the social level, three dominant themes emerged from repeated patterns across the dataset: cultural authenticity, cultural hybridization, and digital commodification. These findings demonstrate that authenticity, hybridization, and commodification are interconnected processes rather than separate categories. Across the dataset, cultural identity is not only expressed but also strategically adapted to align with the logic of the attention economy.

Cultural Authenticity: Tradition as Collective Responsibility

Expressions emphasizing heritage preservation appeared across multiple videos, indicating that cultural identity is consistently framed as ancestral legacy and collective responsibility. Common expressions included:

"Budaya kita harus tetap hidup."

("Our culture must live on.")

"Warisan leluhur yang harus dijaga."

("The heritage of our ancestors must be protected.")

Cultural Hybridization: The Coexistence of Tradition and Modernity

The coexistence of tradition and modernity is evident in expressions such as:

"Tradisional tapi tetap kekinian." (Traditional but still modern)

This pattern was observed across more than half of the dataset, suggesting that hybrid identity is a dominant representation rather than a marginal one.

Digital Commodification: Turning Tradition into Economic and Social Value

Cultural identity is frequently packaged as digital content optimized for visibility and interaction. The integration of cultural content with engagement-oriented strategies appeared in the majority of videos. Examples include direct calls to action and highly optimized tag combinations:

"Follow untuk lebih banyak konten budaya Indonesia."

("Follow for more Indonesian cultural content.")

Hashtags: #fyp #viral #budayakita

The integration of cultural content with engagement-oriented strategies appeared in the majority of videos, indicating that cultural identity is frequently packaged as content for visibility and interaction. These findings demonstrate that authenticity, hybridization, and commodification are interconnected processes rather than separate categories. Across the dataset, cultural identity is not only expressed but also strategically adapted to align with the logic of the attention economy. Overall, the findings are not based on isolated examples but on recurring patterns identified across the 30-video dataset. The combination of frequency patterns, multiple excerpts, and thematic consistency strengthens the validity of the analysis and demonstrates that cultural identity representation on TikTok follows identifiable discursive trends.

Discussion

The discussion interprets the findings by connecting the textual, discursive, and social patterns identified in the Indonesian TikTok dataset to broader sociological and media theories. By applying Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA), this section explains how cultural identity is not merely displayed online but actively reconfigured by platform architecture and digital capitalism. This supports Hall's (1997) argument that cultural identity is continuously produced through representation rather than existing as a fixed essence.

The Dialectics of Digital Cultural Identity

The textual findings reveal a deep tension between preserving traditional roots and conforming to contemporary social media aesthetics. This dialectic reveals how digital spaces alter the communication of ethnic pride in Indonesia.

The findings demonstrate that cultural identity on TikTok is not merely represented but actively constructed through discourse. This supports Hall's argument that cultural identity is continuously produced through representation rather than existing as a fixed essence. The recurring use of identity markers such as "*bangga*," "*budaya kita*," and local-language greetings across the dataset indicates that cultural belonging is discursively constructed through repeated linguistic patterns rather than isolated expressions (Sariyar, 2025)

Hybridity vs. Essentialism: The Reconstruction of Indonesian Identity

The frequent use of code-mixing, such as "*Tradisional tapi tetap kekinian*" (Traditional but still modern), shows that Indonesian creators actively reject a static, museum-ized view of heritage. Instead, they embrace cultural hybridity. According to postcolonial theory, hybridity allows local cultures to remain relevant by blending historical symbols with globalized media formats. The text analysis shows this pattern in over half of the videos, where regional greetings like "*Horas*" are paired with modern editing rhythms. Rather than weakening local identity, this blending creates a flexible form of cultural expression. This hybrid style allows modern Indonesian youth to negotiate their place in a globalized digital environment without abandoning their local heritage (Li & Liang, 2025).

Furthermore, the findings reveal that cultural identity is inherently hybrid and dynamic. The frequent use of expressions such as "*tradisional tapi tetap kekinian*" illustrates how creators negotiate between tradition and modernity. This supports previous studies suggesting that digital cultural identity is characterized by hybridity and fluidity (Hussain, 2025). Rather than preserving culture in its original form, creators actively reinterpret cultural elements to align with contemporary digital practices.

Performative Authenticity and the Quest for Digital Belonging

Textual data shows that the word *bangga* (proud) appears in 70% of the selected videos. This high frequency indicates that displaying authenticity on TikTok is a highly performative act. Creators do not just share culture; they stage it using specific visual markers like traditional textiles and ethnic clothing, which appeared in 75% of the dataset. This performance satisfies the viewer's desire for real, authentic roots. This dynamic is clear in the audience comments expressing *rindu kampung* (hometown nostalgia). The audience's emotional responses turn these short videos into spaces for shared belonging. Through this process, individual expressions of ethnic pride become a collective project to validate Indonesian identity in a digital landscape (Setiadi, 2026).

At the same time, the study shows that authenticity remains an important discursive strategy. Expressions emphasizing cultural pride and heritage appeared consistently across the dataset, indicating that authenticity is not abandoned but strategically constructed. However, authenticity in this context is not purely traditional but is recontextualized within digital formats, suggesting that authenticity and hybridity coexist rather than contradict each other. More importantly, the findings demonstrate that authenticity and hybridity are closely linked to digital commodification.

Algorithmic Governmentality and Hegemony

The discursive practices found in the dataset show how TikTok's platform design shapes cultural expression. This section explores how corporate software rules influence the way users produce and consume cultural texts.

The For You Page Effect: Standardization and the Loss of Local Nuance

The fact that over 80% of the videos used global tags like #fyp and #viral proves that algorithmic curation shapes how cultural content is made. To get views, creators must adapt local traditions to fit the platform's short-form style, fast cuts, and trending sounds. This creates a standard style where complex, local rituals are shortened into 30-second clips. This pressure toward uniformity can dilute the deep historical meaning of local traditions. When regional dances or ceremonies are reshaped to fit the platform's rhythm, the unique local details are often lost. This leaves behind a polished, simplified version of Indonesian culture optimized primarily for quick consumption (Li & Liang, 2025).

In addition, the findings highlight the role of platform structures in shaping discourse. Although direct access to TikTok's algorithm is not available, the consistent use of trending formats, hashtags, and engagement strategies suggests that creators adapt their content to align with platform visibility mechanisms. This supports the concept of algorithmic culture (Striphas, 2015), where cultural production is influenced by technological systems that regulate visibility and circulation.

Agency under the Algorithm: Creator Resistance and Negotiated Discourse

Although the platform's algorithm limits how content is made, creators still show agency by negotiating with these constraints. Creators do not just passively give in to the algorithm. Instead, they use platform features strategically to spread cultural awareness. By combining local language expressions with trending sounds, creators use the system's focus on virality to make marginalized regional cultures visible to millions of users. This tactical approach turns TikTok into a contested space. In this space, platform control and user independence exist together. This dynamic allows Indonesian youth to use corporate tools for their own goals of cultural preservation (Setiadi, 2026). However, rather than treating algorithmic influence as deterministic, the findings suggest a reciprocal relationship in which creators actively negotiate platform constraints while maintaining cultural expression.

Audience Engagement: Participatory Co-Construction of Meaning

Audience participation also plays a crucial role in meaning construction. The analysis of 450+ comments shows recurring patterns of nostalgia, pride, and emotional engagement, indicating that audiences actively participate in reinforcing cultural meanings. This finding supports the concept of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006) where meaning is co-constructed through interaction between creators and audiences.

Digital Capitalism and the Commodification of Tradition

The social practices observed in the data show how cultural elements are turned into digital commodities. This shift alters the primary purpose of cultural expression from community building to economic value.

The Monetization of Cultural Capital: From Heritage to Commodity

The frequent use of calls to action, such as "*Follow untuk lebih banyak konten budaya Indonesia*" (Follow for more Indonesian cultural content), reveals how cultural capital is converted into social and economic capital on TikTok. In the digital attention economy, heritage is no longer just a shared community asset. Instead, it becomes valuable content used to gain followers, likes, and engagement metrics. This process turns cultural traditions into commodities. Rituals, traditional clothing, and local languages are packaged as entertaining clips to attract digital traffic. This changing dynamic shows how deeply digital capitalism influences Indonesian society. It reframes cultural heritage as a resource for personal branding and platform monetization (Li & Liang, 2025).

The integration of cultural content with engagement strategies, such as hashtags, calls to action, and trending formats, indicates that cultural identity is often packaged as content designed to attract visibility. This aligns with Abidin's (2021) concept of the attention

economy, where cultural expressions are transformed into digital resources that generate engagement and popularity. Thus, cultural identity on TikTok operates simultaneously as symbolic expression and as a form of digital capital.

Overall, this study demonstrates that cultural identity on TikTok is shaped by a complex interplay of discourse, technology, and social context. Authenticity, hybridization, and commodification should not be understood as separate processes but as interconnected dimensions of digital cultural representation. Authenticity provides legitimacy, hybridization enables adaptation, and commodification ensures visibility within the platform economy. These three processes operate simultaneously, forming a continuum through which cultural identity is constructed, negotiated, and circulated in digital environments. By integrating these dimensions within Fairclough's CDA framework, this study extends previous research by linking micro-level discourse analysis with macro-level platform dynamics and socio-cultural processes. This contribution is particularly significant in the Indonesian context, where cultural diversity interacts with global digital culture in unique ways.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the representation of cultural identity in Indonesian TikTok content through Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The findings demonstrate that cultural identity is not merely reflected in digital media but is actively constructed through the interaction of linguistic choices, visual symbols, audience participation, and broader socio-cultural contexts. The analysis revealed that cultural identity is represented through identity markers, local language expressions, cultural symbols, and multimodal communication strategies that simultaneously promote cultural authenticity and adaptation to contemporary digital environments. The findings also highlight the dual role of TikTok as both a platform for cultural preservation and a site of cultural transformation. While TikTok increases the visibility of local traditions and encourages cultural participation among younger generations, it also encourages the adaptation of cultural expressions to the logic of visibility, engagement, and digital popularity. Consequently, cultural identity becomes a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between cultural values, platform structures, and audience participation.

A significant contribution of this study lies in its integration of cultural identity representation, algorithmic culture, and digital commodification within Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. By examining textual features, discursive practices, and social practices simultaneously, this study extends previous research on digital discourse beyond purely linguistic analysis and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural identity is negotiated and reconstructed on short-form video platforms. Furthermore, the study contributes empirical evidence from the Indonesian context, which remains relatively underrepresented in current research on TikTok and digital cultural identity.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study analyzed a relatively limited number of TikTok videos, which may not fully represent the diversity of cultural identity representations across the platform. Second, the research focused exclusively on TikTok, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other social media platforms with different technological and communicative characteristics. Third, as with other Critical Discourse Analysis studies, the interpretation of discourse inevitably involves researcher subjectivity, although systematic analytical procedures were employed to enhance trustworthiness. Finally, direct access to TikTok's algorithmic mechanisms was unavailable, meaning that conclusions regarding content visibility were based on observable engagement patterns rather than platform-generated data.

Future research should expand the dataset by including a larger number of videos from diverse cultural regions and creator communities across Indonesia. Comparative studies between TikTok and other digital platforms such as Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, or Facebook Reels would provide deeper insights into platform-specific forms of cultural

representation. Future scholars may also integrate Critical Discourse Analysis with multimodal discourse analysis, digital ethnography, or audience reception studies to better understand how creators, audiences, and platform infrastructures collectively shape cultural identity in contemporary digital environments. Such approaches would further enrich discussions on digital culture, identity formation, and the sociocultural implications of algorithm-driven communication.

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