

## **ADOLESCENT LIFESTYLE CHANGES IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: A SOCIO-CULTURAL STUDY**

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### **Article Info**

#### **Article history:**

Received 14 June, 2025

Approved 22 June 2025

### **Abstract**

The era of social media has had a huge impact on the lives of teenagers, especially in influencing their daily lifestyles. This study aims to examine the changes in adolescent lifestyle due to the use of social media from a socio-cultural perspective, using a descriptive qualitative approach through observation and interviews with adolescents aged 15–18 years in urban environments. The results show that social media significantly affects various aspects of adolescents' lives, ranging from ways of communicating that become faster and more instant but tend to be superficial, to clothing styles that are heavily influenced by digital trends from various platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. In addition, social media has also shaped consumption patterns and the way teenagers fill their free time, which is now more influenced by influencers and digital content. Furthermore, social media also shapes adolescents' perspective on themselves and their social environment, so that local cultural values are beginning to be displaced by a more dominant global culture. Despite this, some teenagers have shown awareness to maintain their local cultural identity amid the strong currents of globalization. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of the active role of families, schools, and communities in providing digital literacy assistance and education, so that adolescents can use social media wisely without losing their identity and cultural heritage. These findings are expected to be input for related parties in designing strategies for character development and strengthening the identity of the younger generation in the ever-growing digital era.

**Keywords:** Teenage Lifestyle, Social Media, Socio-Cultural Change, Cultural Identity

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**How to cite:** Rahmat, R. & Rizkil, T. (2025). Adolescent Lifestyle Changes in the Social Media Era: A Socio-Cultural Study. *Journal of Social, Culture and Humanities*, 1(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.55681/jusbuman.v1i1.33>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Social media has become an integral part of the lives of modern society, especially among teenagers. The development of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on various aspects of life, including lifestyle changes experienced by the

younger generation. Adolescents' lifestyles, which were previously more shaped by family values, the surrounding environment, and local culture, are now undergoing a massive transformation due to exposure to global content spread through various social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. These platforms not only function as a means of entertainment, but also become the dominant medium in shaping the way of thinking, values, behaviors, and identities of today's teenagers.

In the framework of Anthony Giddens' (2009) thinking about reflexive modernity, contemporary society, including adolescents, no longer passively accepts identity from the surrounding environment, but actively reflects and shapes self-identity through lifestyle choices. Social media provides a space for reflection as well as self-representation. Teens use social media to showcase who they are, seek social recognition, and build their cultural identity in digital public spaces. This phenomenon reinforces the relevance of Blumer's (1986) theory of symbolic interactionism, which explains that social meaning is formed through interactions between individuals and symbols—including digital symbols such as emojis, captions, face filters, and visual content. Interaction in cyberspace is the main arena for the formation of meaning and social identity of adolescents.

In the last five years, various studies have shown that there have been very significant changes in the lifestyle of adolescents due to the high intensity of social media use. Hidayat et al. (2021) noted that excessive use of social media has an impact on more instant and superficial communication patterns, changes in consumption behavior, and unrealistic self-image construction. These findings suggest that social media is no longer just a means of communication, but has served as a new cultural socialization agent that in many ways replaces the role of families, schools, and local communities. Digital culture formed through social media tends to be permissive and consumptive, imitating global behavior patterns that are not necessarily in line with social norms and local values that apply in Indonesian society.

This phenomenon raises a critical question: how do today's adolescents manage their identities in the midst of the globalization of information and culture? Some adolescents seem to accept global values raw without critical process, while others try to adapt or even resist culture while still holding on to local identity. These differences suggest that the influence of social media is not homogeneous, but is highly dependent on the social background, reflective capacity, and cultural context in which the adolescent belongs.

This study is important because adolescents are an age group that is in the psychosocial transition phase, namely the period of search for identity and the formation of cultural identity. If social media becomes the only source of reference for values and norms, it is feared that local cultural identity will be shifted or even lost. Therefore, an in-depth socio-cultural study is needed to understand the extent to which social media influences adolescents' lifestyles, as well as how the role of social environments such as family, school, and community can be a counterbalance in the process of forming these values.

In analyzing this phenomenon, several relevant theoretical frameworks are used. Popular culture theory from Storey (2018) explains that media plays a major role in shaping the dominant culture and tastes of society, including the lifestyle of teenagers. Social media, as part of popular culture, spreads certain values that are widely accepted by users, even without realizing it. In this regard, the hegemony theory of Antonio Gramsci (1971) is very important because it explains how cultural domination works subtly through media, not by coercion but

by consensus. This means that social media can replace local values through the massive and repeated spread of global values.

The semiotics approach is also used to look at how digital symbols (images, text, emojis, hashtags) form new meanings in adolescents' lives. These symbols have a profound influence on shaping the way teenagers view the world, themselves, and others. The concept of cultural hybridity from Homi Bhabha (1994) is also relevant in this context, as it explains how the mixing of local and global cultures creates complex new forms of identity. Adolescent identity in the digital age is not a purely local or global identity, but the result of a negotiation process between the two.

Various studies support this thinking. Sari (2022) shows that today's adolescents prioritize social validation from social media (e.g. the number of likes or comments) rather than recognition obtained from real environments such as family or peers directly. Digital identities have become more important than real identities, creating a situation where teenagers feel they must always look "perfect" in cyberspace. This can trigger social anxiety, self-dissatisfaction, and quite serious psychological distress.

However, not all social media impacts are negative. In many cases, social media is also used by teens as a means to explore creativity and introduce local culture to the world. Some teens are actively uploading content featuring regional dances, traditional music, traditional clothing, or folklore with attractive digital packaging. This is a real form of cultural resistance and efforts to preserve traditions through new media. The study by Wijaya and Mahendra (2023) confirms that local content presented in a creative way is able to attract public attention and increase pride in cultural identity. This reinforces the assumption that social media can be a tool of cultural empowerment if used reflectively and responsibly.

Based on these backgrounds and findings, this study aims to analyze the lifestyle changes of adolescents due to the use of social media with a focus on the socio-cultural dimension. There are three main questions that need to be answered: (1) How do adolescents' lifestyles change due to the use of social media? (2) What socio-cultural factors influence the process of change? (3) What are the efforts of adolescents in maintaining local cultural identity in the midst of digital globalization? These questions are expected to help make academic contributions in the fields of social sciences and humanities, as well as serve as a reference for educators and policymakers in designing strategies for youth mentoring in the digital age.

To answer these questions, this study combines a qualitative approach with symbolic interactionism theory, popular culture theory, cultural hegemony, reflexive identity, and cultural hybridity. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture the complexity of the socio-cultural reality experienced by adolescents in their daily lives. The social interactions that occur on social media not only reflect behavior, but also shape ways of thinking and value systems. With this approach, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of the dynamics of adolescent lifestyle changes can be produced.

In the context of education, this study has considerable implications. Digital literacy that has been taught in schools is often still limited to technical skills using technology, without touching on ethical, cultural, and reflective awareness aspects. In fact, in an era that is greatly influenced by digital media, adolescents need to be equipped with the ability to think critically about content, distinguish between constructive and destructive values, and be able to filter information wisely. Character education based on local values must be explicitly integrated

into the curriculum so that adolescents remain with strong cultural roots despite living in a world that is highly open to global influences.

In terms of public policy, the government and other stakeholders also need to pay serious attention to this phenomenon. Policies that encourage the creation of a healthy and inclusive digital space for adolescents are needed, including support for local content development, culturally based digital literacy training, and regulations that control destructive content that can harm adolescent development. A collaborative approach between families, schools, governments, and the wider community is key to building a digital ecosystem that supports the growth of healthy and characterful adolescent identities.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to understand socio-cultural phenomena in depth from the perspective of the subject studied. The data collection technique was carried out through two main methods, namely participatory observation and semi-structured interviews. Participants in this study consisted of 15 adolescents aged 15 to 18 years old who lived in Mataram City, West Nusa Tenggara. The selection of participants is carried out purposively based on criteria: active use of social media for more than two hours per day and have an active account on popular platforms such as TikTok or Instagram.

The interviews were conducted in person and online using an open-ended interview guide that included a variety of questions regarding digital habits, content preferences, and adolescents' perceptions of local cultural values. In addition, observations were carried out to record adolescents' digital activities in daily life, both in online and offline contexts, in order to capture the dynamics of social interaction and the use of digital symbols.

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2019). The analysis process is carried out through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, as adapted from the model of Miles and Huberman (2014). The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques, both source triangulation and method triangulation. In addition, data analysis is associated with theories of symbolic interactionism, popular culture, as well as reflexive identity theory to strengthen the interpretation and provide depth of analysis of the phenomenon being studied.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The development of information technology, especially social media, has had a transformational impact in various aspects of human life, including teenagers. Adolescents are an age group that is in the stage of finding identity and forming social identity, so they are very vulnerable to environmental influences, especially digital media. This study reveals five main aspects of adolescent lifestyle changes due to the influence of social media, namely: social communication, self-expression and appearance, leisure activities, consumption patterns, and self-identity construction. These five aspects are analyzed using the framework of contemporary social theories and empirical studies from the last five years, in order to provide a complete and contextual picture of the socio-cultural changes that are taking place.

First, in the aspect of social communication, social media has shifted the pattern of direct communication to virtual communication based on symbols, text, emojis, and visuals.

This communication pattern tends to be short, instantaneous, and symbolic. This is in line with the findings of Arifah et al. (2022) who stated that the higher the intensity of social media use among adolescents, the more the quality of verbal interaction and social empathy they have. Teens often interact through features such as direct messages, stories, or short comments that do not allow for deep expression of emotion and empathy. These findings reinforce the view of symbolic interactionism from Blumer (1986), who emphasized that social interactions are formed through symbols that have subjective meaning. In this context, digital symbols such as emojis and memes have replaced verbal expressions and body language that are usually present in face-to-face communication. Data from BPS Mataram City (2023) also shows that more than 90% of adolescents aged 10–19 years have actively used social media regularly, indicating a major shift from offline to online communication. This is proof that social media is not only a communication tool, but has become the main social space for teenagers in establishing relationships.

Second, in terms of self-expression and appearance, social media has become the main stage for teenagers to form and present their self-identity. Not only through physical appearance, but also through photo uploads, the use of filters, caption choices, and the type of content shared. The concept of performativity from Judith Butler (1990) is particularly relevant here, which states that identity is not something static or innate, but rather is formed through repetitive action in a social context. Research by Lestari and Suryadi (2020) revealed that adolescents experience social pressure to appear according to aesthetic standards that go viral on social media, such as slim bodies, fair skin, or luxurious lifestyles. This gives rise to the phenomenon of the "ideal self" which is often unrealistic, causing identity crises, low self-confidence, and the emergence of disorders such as social anxiety. Teens are driven to display the best version of themselves online, which is often far removed from the reality of their daily lives. This social performance is driven more by the desire to gain validation, not authenticity, which can erode healthy self-awareness.

Third, in the dimension of leisure activities, the majority of teenagers now spend their time in front of the screen, whether to watch short videos, play online games, or follow trends on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. The study of Susanti et al. (2021) shows that adolescents' physical and social activities have decreased drastically along with the increasing duration of digital media use. This phenomenon reflects the concept of passive consumption culture as described by Hidayat et al. (2021), where adolescents are more passive consumers of content than active producers in real life. Data from BPS NTB (2023) reinforces this, noting that 99.23% of adolescent gadget users in Mataram City use the internet more for social media and entertainment, not for educational or productive activities. This dependence has an impact on reduced direct social activities, increased social isolation, and weakened interpersonal skills and physical fitness. In fact, adolescence is an important period in the development of social and emotional capacity, which is now largely replaced by superficial and algorithmic digital interactions.

Fourth, adolescent consumption patterns have also experienced a drastic shift as a result of exposure to digital content. Social media, through influencer influence and advertising algorithms, shapes teens' consumption tastes and preferences, from food and clothing to overall lifestyle. The study by Ramadhani and Yusuf (2023) states that adolescents tend to prefer to buy products that are trending on social media rather than considering the functional value or

sustainability of the product. This indicates a shift in preferences from need-based consumption to lifestyle-based consumption. In this context, Nasrullah (2017) states that social media accelerates the globalization of consumption culture, which ultimately replaces appreciation of local products with global brands. As a result, in addition to the increase in consumptive culture, there is also an erosion of local values, including interest in traditional products and cultural heritage. Teens are becoming part of a global marketplace controlled by digital trends and visual capitalism, no longer by local or community values.

Fifth, in terms of identity construction, social media provides space for teenagers to create digital personas that can be very different from their everyday identities. Features such as the number of likes, comments, and shares become social benchmarks that affect the perception of a teenager's "self-worth". Research by Fatimah and Nugroho (2022) found that the pressure to get digital validation has an impact on the emergence of social anxiety, feelings of not being good enough, and depression. In the theory of virtual identity put forward by Castells (2010), identity in the digital era is fluid, fragmented, and heavily influenced by networks and algorithms. Identity is no longer shaped by traditional community interactions, such as family or school, but rather by instant feedback received online. This has led to a shift in orientation from collective identities to individualistic identities built on digital preferences that tend to change quickly and are unstable.

However, it is important to note that the lifestyle changes of adolescents due to social media are not one-way or completely negative. This study also found the phenomenon of cultural resistance, where some adolescents actively use social media to preserve and promote local culture. They create content in regional languages, display traditional arts, and raise folklore in digital format. This phenomenon is in line with the concept of cultural hybridity from Bhabha (1994), who explains that cultures are not always subject to global domination, but can also undergo mixing that gives birth to new cultural expressions. Wijaya and Mahendra's (2023) study shows that local content that is packaged in an attractive and creative way can get wide attention and even go viral. This shows that social media can be a space for cultural empowerment if managed in a reflective and innovative manner.

These findings show that adolescents are not only victims of the current of digital globalization, but also active actors who are able to process and respond to it in creative ways. Therefore, the transformation of adolescent lifestyles in the era of social media must be understood holistically. On the one hand, social media does present major challenges such as an increase in consumptive culture, identity crises, and a decrease in the quality of direct social interaction. But on the other hand, social media also provides great opportunities for self-development, creativity, and revitalization of local culture if used wisely.

Given the large influence of social media on the formation of adolescents' lifestyles and identities, the role of family, school, and society is very important in providing assistance that is not only technical, but also critical and contextual. Digital literacy provided to adolescents should not be limited to the ability to use technology, but also includes aspects of digital ethics, cultural awareness, and self-reflection. The educational curriculum must include elements of character education based on local values so that adolescents have a strong foundation of identity and are not easily carried away by instant and superficial global currents. In addition, public policies must also be directed at the development of inclusive digital cultural infrastructure and support local creativity. The government and related institutions need to

provide space and incentives for the development of creative content that uplifts Indonesian cultural values, as well as strengthens a healthy, fair, and sustainable digital ecosystem. With the right strategy, social media can be directed to be a means of forming a balanced adolescent lifestyle between openness to globalization and attachment to local cultural roots.

## CONCLUSION

Social media has had a significant impact on changes in adolescent lifestyles, especially in social and cultural contexts. This study revealed that five main aspects of adolescents' lifestyles have been transformed due to the intensity of social media use, namely social communication, self-expression and appearance, leisure activities, consumption patterns, and self-identity construction. Social media plays a dominant role as a dominant medium in shaping interactions, lifestyle preferences, and identity perceptions mediated by algorithms and global trends. While social media provides freedom of expression and access to information, it also poses serious challenges to local values, such as a growing culture of consumptive consumption, weakening of direct social interaction, and reliance on digital validation.

However, the findings also show that some teens are not fully passive consumers in digital culture. Some of them actually use social media as a space to maintain and express local cultural identity, such as through the creation of content in regional languages or promoting cultural heritage. This shows the existence of positive cultural resistance dynamics as well as opportunities for the development of local creativity in the digital frame.

Thus, a strategic approach that involves the role of families, educational institutions, and local communities is very important to assist adolescents in responding to global information flows. Strengthening critical digital literacy, character education, and the integration of local cultural values in the education system are important recommendations so that adolescents can grow as globally open individuals, but remain strong in their cultural identity. An educational curriculum that combines cultural values with 21st-century skills needs to be developed as a concrete effort to prepare the younger generation to face the challenges of the times in a balanced and rooted manner.

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