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The Role of Gen Z's Digital Literacy in Supporting the Preservation of Local Cultural Identity Through Social Media in Palembang

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Abstract

This study examines the role of Gen Z's Digital Literacy in supporting the Preservation of local cultural identity through social media in Palembang. The purpose of this research is to examine the extent of Gen Z's digital literacy in accessing, evaluating, and managing local cultural content, as well as to describe their role in supporting cultural preservation through social media. The method used is a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), using data collection techniques that include questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical methods, while qualitative data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and data verification or conclusion drawing. The analysis is based on the Empowering Eight framework by Wijetunge & Alahakoon and Role by Biddle and Thomas. The results indicated that Gen Z's level of digital literacy is relatively high, especially in selecting, creating, and evaluating local cultural content. Furthermore, interview findings reveal that Gen Z is not only active in producing creative and norm-compliant cultural content but is also capable of responding to feedback and criticism in a mature manner. In conclusion, digital literacy plays a crucial role in empowering Gen Z as agents of local cultural preservation in the digital era. Theoretically, this study supports Role Theory and extends it to the digital context, demonstrating that digital literacy facilitates Generation Z's enactment of its social role in promoting local cultural identity through social media.

Keywords: *Local Culture, Gen Z, Digital Literacy, Social Media, Cultural Preservation*

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed almost every aspect of human life, including the way humans interact, work, and access information. The internet and social media have become crucial, especially for the younger generation. Social media is one of the most actively used digital spaces, particularly by Gen Z (Harahap, 2022). These changes not only brought convenience but also new challenges in various fields, one of which is cultural preservation.

Culture itself is understood as a crucial concept in societal life, encompassing values, norms, beliefs, and practices that shape a community's way of life (Prasetyo, 2023). However, if we observe the current situation of culture, which inherently encompasses the values, norms, and thought patterns of a society, it is increasingly fragile, especially local cultures that are directly exposed to digital globalization trend.

Local culture, as a nation's identity and character, is increasingly being marginalized, especially amidst the onslaught of global culture, easily accessible through digital media (Swastiwi, 2024) Gen Z, as the most active generation in the digital space, often knows more about foreign cultures than their own cultural heritage, which inherently contains the values, perspectives, and identity of the nation (Zis, Effendi, & Roem, 2021)

In this phenomenon, digital literacy plays an important role as a key that is not only technical skills, but also as a critical awareness to create and disseminate cultural content (Meilinda, Malinda, & Aisyah, 2020). Therefore, Gen Z, as a group of individuals born and raised amidst the advancement of digital technology, should be able to utilize digital platforms creatively and responsibly, so that social media can become a strategic medium for preserving local culture and it remains the identity of a community group.

In addition, the presence of social media has changed the way people interact and express their cultural identities through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, which have now become new avenues for introducing local culture to the global community (Almahdali et al., 2025). In the cultural context of Palembang, various cultural elements such as traditional foods, traditional clothing, and regional arts are starting to be widely promoted by the younger generation in the form of creative content. This phenomenon is evidence that social media can function as a bridge between traditional cultural values and modern digital lifestyles (Anista, 2023). However, without good digital literacy

skills, these efforts risk creating inconsistencies in cultural meaning due to inaccurate delivery or being solely trend oriented.

Furthermore, understanding digital literacy among Gen Z is important to ensure that local culture is not simply converted into a digital commodity, but that its originality and nobility of cultural value are preserved (Hidayat, Effendi, & Zarkasyi, 2025). Digital literacy is not only about the ability to use technological devices, but also about the ability to think critically in producing and consuming cultural information (Naufal, 2021).

In the context of such capability measurement, the Empowering Eight (E8) model developed by IFLA-ALP and NILIS Sri Lanka offers eight stages of information literacy, namely identifying, exploring, selecting, organizing, creating, presenting, assessing, and applying information (Wijetunge & Alahakoon, 2009). These eight steps provide a highly relevant framework for measuring and encouraging Gen Z's capacity to use digital platforms critically and responsibly, including for the purpose of preserving local culture.

Gen Z actually carries out a clear social role as the successor and guardian of the nation's cultural heritage. To explore the role of Gen Z, using the Role Theory framework developed by Biddle and Thomas (in Amir, 2021), This role includes expectations from the community for them to display behaviors that reflect love and appreciation for the local culture, norms that govern the way they represent culture in the digital space, real embodiment (performance) through the content they create and disseminate, as well as assessments and sanctions from the social environment on the extent to which they carry out the role. With this framework, the question of whether Gen Z is exercising a cultural preservation role can be analyzed in a more structured and measured manner.

Although the relationship between digital literacy and social media use has been widely discussed in previous research, there are even studies that link digital literacy to the preservation of local culture, such as the research of Ratumanan et al. (2022) emphasizing the importance of the role of families, schools, and communities in getting used to the use of regional languages in the digital ecosystem. Santoso et al. (2022) also proved that digital literacy training is able to improve the ability of village communities and produce digital content in regional languages as a medium for cultural preservation. Furthermore, Sari & Virgy, (2024) found that community-based digital literacy can empower the Baduy Luar indigenous people in controlling cultural representation in digital media while protecting intangible cultural heritage. The three studies have similarities in viewing digital literacy as a strategic instrument for the preservation of local culture in the digital era.

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Previous research generally used a qualitative approach and focused on village communities or indigenous communities, but did not specifically examine Generation Z as active users of social media. In addition, there has been no research that uses the Empowering Eight (E8) model as a quantitative framework to measure the role of digital literacy in the preservation of local culture by Generation Z in Indonesia.

Studies on Gen Z digital literacy generally focus on technical aspects such as application skills or digital security, without examining how these skills are utilized for cultural purposes. Second, research on culture-based digital literacy has been conducted primarily at the national level and has not yet fully captured local cultural dynamics, including the Palembang contex

Furthermore, there is still little research that positions Gen Z as agents of cultural preservation through content production practices on social media. Most studies only view them as users or consumers of digital information. Methodologically, previous research also tends to be fragmented between quantitative and qualitative approaches, thus failing to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between digital skills and cultural preservation practices.

Therefore, this study seeks to explain the extent of Gen Z's digital literacy skills in accessing, evaluating, and managing local cultural content on social media. It also analyzes the role of digital literacy in supporting the preservation of local cultural identity through social media frequently used by Generation Z. Thus, researchers are interested in presenting a study that integrates digital literacy, the cultural role of Gen Z, and the local context of Palembang within the framework of utilizing social media as a space for cultural preservation to maintain, introduce, and promote local cultural identity so that it can survive in the ever-moving digital era.

Therefore, this research is here to fill the existing gap by empirically explaining the extent of Generation Z's digital literacy ability from identifying, exploring, selecting, organizing, creating, presenting, assessing, and applying local cultural information in the digital space. This study also analyzes the role of digital literacy in supporting the preservation of local cultural identity through social media platforms that are often used by Generation Z. Thus, the researcher is interested in presenting a study that integrates digital literacy, the cultural role of Generation Z, and the local context of Palembang in the framework of using social media as a space for cultural preservation to maintain, introduce, and promote local cultural identity so that it survives in the era digital that is constantly moving.

METHODS

This research uses a combined quantitative and qualitative research method (mixed methods). According to Creswell (2014), mixed-method research is an approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study. This means that both approaches are used simultaneously in the research process. Similarly, Sarwono J. (2011) explains that mixed-methods is a form of research that utilizes more than one method, namely quantitative and qualitative approaches, to obtain relevant empirical data to answer research questions (Darmawan et al., 2024).

In this study, the population consists of all Generation Z (Gen Z), defined as the demographic cohort of individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (Dimock, 2019). This study focuses on those born between 2000 and 2007, including students and young adults who actively use social media in the city of Palembang. The researcher used a stratified random sampling technique, which, according to Sugiyono (2010 in cited in Masri & Prasodjo, 2021) is a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria. The criteria set were Gen Z aged 18 to 22 years, with a total of 100 respondents. Informants are people who participate in the research process as providers of information to researchers (Maulana, Yunita, Sutansyah, & Agustini, 2024) This study involved 5 informants from the Gen Z community who live in Palembang City. The selection criteria used purposive sampling, with informants selected based on their experience with the cultural communities they belong to. Most of the informants are members of cultural ambassadors, ranging from University Cultural Ambassadors to Palembang Cultural Ambassadors.

Two data collection techniques were used in this study: First, Questionnaire. This study used a questionnaire with a Likert scale as the data collection technique (Nuryanah, Zakiah, Fahrurrozi, & Hasanah, 2021). Distributing 24 questionnaire items to respondents, considering eight indicators, and three statements created for each indicator. This questionnaire was created in an online format using Google Forms and then distributed. Second, In-depth interviews. Qualitative data for the study, data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews or semi-structured interview format to explore the role of digital literacy in supporting the preservation of local cultural identity among Generation Z (Nasarudin et. al., 2024). Through semi-structured interviews, researchers obtained contextual yet flexible information and maintained focus on the research topic.

For Data analysis, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, in this study used a descriptive analysis design. The researcher used the Mean

formula in the data analysis technique. In qualitative data, data analysis uses an interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Rijali, 2018). which consists of three stages, namely: a) Data reduction, when reducing data, researchers simplify and select interview data that contains only relevant information. While data that is not directly related to the question indicators will be excluded. b) Data presentation, the analyzed data is then compiled and presented in a descriptive narrative form to facilitate the process of understanding and further analysis. In addition, the presentation helps in identifying the extent of Gen Z's role in introducing and preserving Palembang's local culture. c) Conclusion, the conclusion is the final stage and provides a more concise overview of the findings in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Gen Z's Digital Literacy Level in Accessing, Evaluating, and Managing Local Cultural Content on Social Media

This study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach, as the primary aim is not to test a causal relationship but to map out how Gen Z engages with local cultural content on social media, specifically, how they access, evaluate, and manage such content in their daily digital practices. A descriptive design is well suited to this purpose because it allows the researcher to capture a clear, measurable picture of an existing condition without manipulating any variables, which aligns with the study's intent to document rather than to explain causation.

The analysis is grounded in the Empowering 8 framework, a model widely used to assess information literacy through a structured, step-by-step process. The framework comprises eight core indicators; Identify, Explore, Select, Organize, Create, Present, Assess, and Apply, each of which was translated into three statement items in the research instrument, resulting in a 24-item questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). This structure was chosen because it breaks digital literacy down into discrete, observable behaviors, making it possible to identify not only the respondents' overall literacy level but also which specific stage of the information process they struggle with most.

Data were collected from 100 respondents belonging to Generation Z, aged 18–25, selected through a purposive sampling technique on the basis that they actively use social media platforms and regularly encounter or interact with local cultural content there. This age range was chosen because it represents the segment of Gen Z that is both digitally native and old enough to exercise independent judgment in evaluating and sharing information — making them a meaningful population for assessing digital literacy in practice rather than in

theory. Each respondent's answers were processed using a mean formula to calculate the average score for every indicator, allowing the eight dimensions of digital literacy to be compared side by side. These eight indicators mean were then combined into a single grand mean, which serves as a composite score describing the respondents' overall level of digital literacy.

The results of the analysis are presented in the following table:

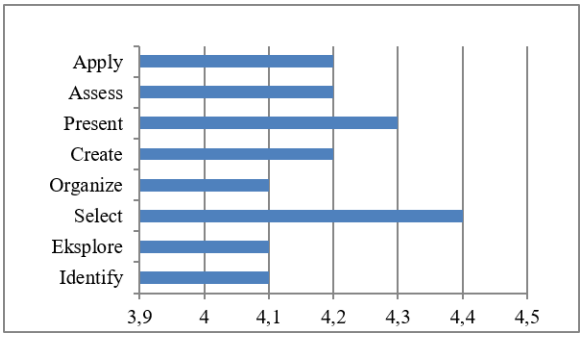
Table 1. Analysis of Digital Literacy Level Variable Indicators (The Empowering 8)

No.	Indicator	Mean	Information
1	*Identify*	4.1	Agree
2	*Explore*	4.1	Agree
3	*Select*	4.4	Strongly agree
4	*Organize*	4.1	Agree
5	*Create*	4.2	Strongly agree
6	*Present*	4.3	Strongly agree
7	*Assess*	4.2	Strongly agree
8	*Apply*	4.2	Strongly agree
Average Total		**4.2**	**Strongly agree**

Source: The Empowering Theory 8

Based on Table 1 above, information on 8 indicators consisting of 24 statements was obtained, and the total indicator score was calculated and divided according to the number of indicators using the grand mean formula. Referring to the results of the analysis that has been conducted, the average score of the digital literacy level variable was obtained at 4.2. This value is in the range of 4.2 to 5.0, which indicates that Gen Z's digital literacy level in accessing, evaluating, and managing local cultural content on social media. This finding indicates that Gen Z has good skills in utilizing information technology critically and effectively in an academic context, so it can be categorized as **High**.

Diagram 1. Summary Results of Digital



Literacy Level Variable Indicators

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From the recapitulation results based on the diagram above, the highest indicator is the Select indicator with a score of 4.4. Meanwhile, the lowest indicators are the Organize, Explore, and Identify indicators with a score of 4.1.

The Role of Digital Literacy in Supporting the Preservation of Local Cultural Identity Through Social Media Frequently Used by Generation Z

The quantitative findings presented earlier offer a broad picture of how digitally literate Gen Z respondents are when engaging with local cultural content online, yet numbers alone cannot fully capture why they engage the way they do, or what they actually hope social media can achieve for the culture they claim to care about. To fill this gap, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with five informants, selected for their active involvement in creating or sharing content related to Palembang's local culture on social media. This qualitative step was taken deliberately: while a survey can measure the level of digital literacy, only direct conversation can reveal the motivations, hopes, and personal meaning that young people attach to the act of preserving their cultural identity in a digital space.

1. Role Expectations

Palembang, as one of the oldest centers of Malay-Islamic civilization in Sumatra, carries a rich repertoire of local traditions, oral literature, and customary practices that are increasingly at risk of fading from everyday awareness not because they have disappeared, but because the younger generation now encounters culture primarily through screens rather than through direct transmission from elders or community elders. It is precisely within this shift that digital literacy becomes relevant: it is not merely a technical skill for using social media, but a determining factor in whether Gen Z can access, interpret, and re-present local culture accurately, or whether that culture instead risks being distorted, oversimplified, or lost amid the flow of digital content.

Building on this concern, the interviews were directed at uncovering the informants' *role expectations* that is, what they believe social media should ideally do, and what role they themselves feel capable and responsible for playing, in sustaining Palembang's cultural identity. Rather than asking abstract questions about culture in general, the researchers invited the informants to reflect concretely on their own digital habits and aspirations: platforms they use most often, the kind of cultural content they choose to create or share, and the outcomes they hope to see from that effort. The following section presents their views and expectations regarding the role digital media should play in preserving and promoting local culture, as expressed in their own words.

"*By creating interest and pride in culture, in relevant, creative, and accessible way, of course. Such as creating interesting cultural content or by connecting cultural elements with current digital trends*." (Informant 1: Yusnani)

"*What I need to achieve is to introduce Palembang culture to Gen Z and other generations through digitalization.*" (Informant 2: Dwi Arya Andini)

"*The audience can understand everything we convey, especially want it comes to culture and other topics. The moral message must be clear but interspersed with interestings themes that are not boring.*" (Informant 3: Sandi Tumiwa)

"*The hope is to get a positive response from social media users. In this case, it can be in the form of likes, positive comments, and shares made by the public regarding to introduction of cultural (which can be in the form of content about Palembang culture)*." (Informant 4: Marsa Lena)

"*I hope to be involved in productive activities, so that I can preserve cultural values, especially Palembang culture, so that children do not forget the culture around them.*" (Informant 5: Yola Natalis)

From the above interviews, it was found that each informant had different expectations in preserving Palembang culture through social media, which is familiar to Generation Z. Gen Z perceives digital media as a strategic platform for sustaining and promoting local culture in a manner that is more effective, creative, and inclusive. They emphasize that cultural content must be presented in formats aligned with contemporary digital trends, ensuring accessibility while fostering a sense of pride in cultural identity. The communication of cultural messages is viewed as needing to be clear yet engaging, enabling audiences, particularly younger generations, to understand the intended values without experiencing cognitive fatigue or disinterest.

Moreover, Gen Z expects that digitalization efforts related to culture will receive broader public support, indicated through forms of engagement such as likes, positive comments, and content sharing. They also highlight the importance of maintaining active participation in culture-based productive activities as a means to preserve the continuity of local values and prevent the erosion of Palembang's cultural roots among the younger generation. Overall, these findings underscore that digital media is regarded as a vital arena for the preservation, adaptation, and transmission of local cultural heritage in the contemporary digital ecosystem.

2. Norm

Beyond expressing what they hope social media can achieve for local culture, the informants' answers also reveal something more grounded: how they actually understand the norms and responsibilities that come with using social media to

Librarianship in Muslim Societies, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2026, pp. 102-122

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promote that culture. This distinction matters, because having good intentions toward cultural preservation does not automatically mean a person exercises them responsibly — accuracy, respect for tradition, and sensitivity to how a culture is represented online all require a level of awareness that goes beyond simply wanting to help. It is this awareness that the following interview responses seek to uncover: not only what the informants wish to contribute, but how they believe that contribution should be carried out appropriately, ethically, and in a manner that honors the culture they represent. The interview results are presented below:

> "*It must be interesting, meaningful, authentic, and responsible for maintaining authenticity, respect, and education.*" (Informant 1: Yusnani)
>
> "*The values held are, of course, related to ethics and manners. Such as dressing modestly, using casual but polite language (so that it remains attractive to Gen Z), and not containing elements that offend ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations.*" (Informant 4: Marsa Lena)
>
> "*Continue to highlight or prioritize the culture that is inherent in being a Palembang native and maintain the image of cultural indentity*." (Informant 5: Yola Natalis)

Based on the interview data, the informants have a foundation for creating and sharing Palembang cultural content on social media. Informants emphasized authentic content and respect for cultural values. Finally, the Informant emphasized ethical considerations in creating content without involving racial, ethnic, and intergroup (SARA) elements. This demonstrates that Gen Z is not only technologically literate but also understands the norms and values involved in sharing cultural content on social media.

3. Behavior Role Performance

Expectations and awareness of norms are only meaningful if they translate into actual practice. This final indicator, therefore, shifts the focus from what informants hope or believe they should do, to what they actually do — how their stated intentions to preserve local culture are reflected in their real behavior on social media. Based on the questions posed under the Performance indicator, the following answers were obtained from the informants.

> "*As a cultural ambassador on social media, my approach is to create educational videos about cultural on social media such as Instagram that highlight things that Palembang such as bridges, tanjak, pempek, jumputan clothes, and dances. Of course, the aim is to make the younger generation feel close to and proud of their own culture through the format I have*

create." (Informant 1: Yusnani)

"*Creating videos themed around the cultural and history of the Kingdom in the city of Palembang*." (Informant 2: Dwi Arya Andini)

"*Many, introducing historical sites, tourist destinations, and customs in Palembang*." (Informant 3: Sandi Tumiwa)

"*What I have done in relation to introducing Palembang culture is creating content with my friends about the contribution of religion to culture. This content also includes footage from Palembang's cultural heritage site (a form of preservation of Palembang culture). Not only that, we also introduced it to the surrounding community and published it on social media*." (Informant 4: Marsa Lena)

"*Creating content or activities that embrace Palembang culture, such as food, traditional clothing, and Palembang history*." (Infoman5: Yola Natalis)

Based on the data from the interviews, all five informants are quite active in using social media to promote Palembang's culture. The content produced varies, encompassing educational videos on local landmarks, traditional practices, culinary heritage, traditional attire, royal history, and other elements of cultural significance. Beyond digital production, several informants also engage in culture-based activities within their local communities, demonstrating efforts to internalize and promote cultural values through both online and offline practices. Overall, the data indicate that the younger generation in Palembang perceives social media as a strategic medium for sustaining and promoting local cultural identity. Through visual, narrative, and educational modes of representation, they contribute to strengthening cultural attachment, pride, and awareness, particularly among their peers, while reinforcing the relevance of Palembang's cultural heritage in the contemporary digital environment.

4. Assessment

Behavior does not occur in a vacuum; once content is shared, it inevitably invites a response from its audience. This section, therefore, moves beyond the informants' own actions to examine how those actions are received — specifically, how other social media users assess and react to the local cultural content they produce. The interview results below show the extent of the informants' experience with this feedback, offering a glimpse of whether their efforts to preserve local culture are recognized and appreciated by the wider digital community.

"*Of course, audience reactions vary." It's up to us to filter which comments can build our creativity*." (Informant 3: Sandi Tumiwa)

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"*Of course I have. So far, the public response to the content I shared has been good, with most supporting the action and giving positive responses.*" (Informant 4: Marsa Lena)

The interview data indicate that all informants received diverse forms of audience feedback in response to the cultural content they disseminated. Notably, Informant 3 demonstrated a reflective approach by engaging with these responses constructively and using them as a basis for self-evaluation and content improvement. The perspectives expressed across the five informants collectively illustrate that Gen Z exhibits openness to public appraisal as an integral component of digital cultural preservation efforts. Overall, these findings confirm that audience interaction constitutes a critical element in sustaining creators' motivation, enhancing the quality of cultural content production, and reinforcing the social legitimacy of cultural promotion within digital environments.

5. Sanctions

Assessment from other social media users rarely stops at mere reaction, it often carries consequences, whether in the form of appreciation that encourages informants to keep creating, or criticism and backlash that make them more cautious about what they post. This final section explores those consequences directly, examining the sanctions, positive or negative, that informants have experienced as a result of sharing local cultural content. Based on the questions posed under this indicator, the following answers were obtained from the informants:

"*Through self-introspection and introspection of the content we publish... if there are indeed many mistakes and problems in the content, then in the future we must be more thorough and careful about the content we publish*." (Informant 3: Sandi Tumiwa)

"*It often happens, especially in the entertainment world, that many people consider culture to be trivial. However, I respond to the goal rather than obstacles*." (Informant 5: Yola Natalis)

Based on the informants' responses related to the performance indicators, it can be inferred that they exhibit a reflective, adaptive, and improvement-oriented approach in the production of cultural content. The informants highlighted the importance of conducting systematic self-evaluation of previously published content as a means to identify inaccuracies and enhance the quality of subsequent outputs. They also acknowledged the existence of dismissive attitudes toward cultural content within the entertainment industry; however,

rather than being discouraged by such perceptions, they remained focused on the broader objective of cultural preservation.

The overall analysis of the interview data demonstrates that Gen Z's level of digital literacy plays a crucial role in supporting the preservation and revitalization of Palembang's local cultural identity through social media. The informants exhibit not only an understanding of the functional and communicative potential of digital platforms but also a proactive awareness of the need to convey cultural values in creative and engaging ways. These findings reveal that Gen Z functions not merely as consumers of digital content but also as active producers who recognize the social responsibilities and local cultural values embedded in their creative practices.

Through the integration of creativity, ethical awareness, and a commitment to continuous learning, Gen Z contributes significantly to the digital preservation of Palembang's cultural heritage. Their efforts help ensure that local culture remains visible, adaptive, and relevant within an increasingly dynamic digital ecosystem. This underscores the pivotal role of young digital actors in sustaining cultural continuity and strengthening cultural identity in contemporary mediated environments.

DISCUSSION

Gen Z's Digital Literacy Level in Accessing, Evaluating, and Managing Local Cultural Content on Social Media

Based on the analysis, *the grand mean score* was 4.2, which falls into the "very good" category. These results prove that the level of digital literacy among Gen Z in Palembang is relatively high in accessing, evaluating, and managing local cultural content on social media. It can therefore be concluded that Gen Z has a good ability to utilize information technology critically and effectively.

When viewed from each indicator, the highest score was obtained in the select indicator with an average score of 4.4, which shows Gen Z's ability to select and sort local cultural content that accordance with cultural values. Meanwhile, the indicators with the lowest scores, namely Identify, Explore, and Organize, each obtained a score of 4.1, which means that is still room to improve their ability to recognize, explore, and organize cultural information more optimally.

Overall, these findings show that Gen Z already possesses a high level of digital literacy awareness and ability, particularly in the context of preserving local culture through social media. These results are in line with (Harahap, 2022) And (Meilinda dkk., 2020) which explains that the digital literacy of the younger

generation has a major influence on their participation in preserving and introducing cultural values in the digital space.

The Role of Digital Literacy in Supporting the Preservation of Local Cultural Identity Through Social Media Frequently Used by Generation Z

Based on the discussion described above, Gen Z's digital literacy level is high, especially in the Select, Create, and Present indicators. Therefore, from these findings, Gen Z has a good ability to access, select, and manage local cultural content on social media. To understand how digital literacy skills can support the preservation of local cultural identity, this study also conducted a qualitative analysis through in-depth interviews with five informants. The results of these interviews were used to answer the second research question and provide a more contextual explanation of the previous quantitative findings.

1. Expectations regarding Role

Findings from the interviews indicate that Generation Z participants view social media as a space with the potential to introduce and support the preservation of Palembang's cultural heritage. They consider cultural content to be more engaging when it is presented in a creative, meaningful, and relevant way to contemporary digital users, particularly young audiences. For Gen Z, cultural preservation involves more than simply providing cultural information; it also requires presenting that information in a form capable of capturing the audience's interest and encouraging their engagement. They associate the dissemination of cultural content via social media with an opportunity to introduce local traditions and foster greater appreciation for Palembang's cultural identity. Social media is therefore understood not merely as a channel for distributing information, but also as a space where cultural meaning and identity can be communicated and encountered by a wider audience.

The participants' practices also demonstrate that their digital literacy extends beyond the technical use of digital platforms. Producing cultural content requires them to consider cultural values and meanings, audience interests, and the appropriate ways to communicate local knowledge in a digital environment. Digital skills are therefore closely linked to cultural awareness and participation. Rather than merely acting as recipients of cultural information, participants are engaged in selecting, interpreting, producing, and disseminating cultural content via platforms that form part of their everyday digital practices. This interpretation is consistent with Meilinda et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of digital literacy awareness in fostering the creation and use of content that holds educational and cultural value. In this study, such practices demonstrate how digital literacy can support cultural participation by enabling

young people to communicate local cultural knowledge in contemporary digital forms. However, the use of social media alone cannot be regarded as evidence of successful cultural preservation. Rather, it provides a contemporary space in which Gen Z can participate in introducing, communicating, and maintaining the visibility of Palembang's cultural heritage.

2. Norm

Regarding the normative dimension, the interview findings indicate that the participants placed considerable emphasis on ethical values and social responsibility in their use of digital media. They stressed the importance of maintaining the authenticity of their content, using respectful language, and considering the potential impact of the content they shared to avoid offending or causing harm to others. Their accounts suggest that digital content production was shaped not solely by technical considerations, but also by social values and norms that influenced decisions about what to present, how to communicate it, and how to anticipate audience responses. In this sense, producing cultural content was not treated as a value-neutral activity; rather, it involved negotiating cultural values with the expectations associated with communication in digital spaces.

Within the context of local culture, this negotiation involved integrating values that the participants considered important with norms of appropriate digital communication. Their emphasis on authenticity, respectful language, and the potential social consequences of shared content illustrates how cultural participation may involve more than the transmission of cultural knowledge; it may also involve attention to socially recognised expectations concerning appropriate behaviour. These practices can be understood through Role Behaviour Theory, which conceptualises social roles in relation to the values, norms, and expectations associated with those roles. From this perspective, the participants' normative considerations provide insight into how they understood and enacted their emerging roles as producers and disseminators of local cultural content. Their accounts thus illustrate an ongoing interaction between cultural values and digital communication norms in shaping how cultural knowledge was represented and communicated online.

3. Role Behavior Performance

In terms of behaviour, the interview findings indicate that the Generation Z participants were actively involved in promoting Palembang's cultural heritage through social media. They used various digital platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, to create and share content related to traditional food, traditional

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clothing, history, and other cultural activities. Within the Empowering Eight framework, these practices show that the ability to create and present information extends beyond information consumption to the production and dissemination of cultural content in digital spaces. The participants' activities also illustrate how information literacy may function as a form of cultural participation when digital skills are applied to the creation and communication of culturally relevant content. Through these practices, the participants moved beyond simply receiving and consuming information to contributing to how local cultural knowledge was represented and communicated to wider audiences.

The participants' accounts further show that social media provided opportunities to maintain the visibility of local traditions in contemporary digital environments. Rather than being positioned solely as consumers of digital content, the participants described themselves through practices involving the production and dissemination of cultural content, thereby participating in a digital cultural ecosystem. Their activities contributed to the representation, promotion, and continued visibility of Palembang's cultural heritage online. However, such participation should not be equated with the successful preservation of cultural heritage in its entirety. Social media may provide a space for the transmission and reproduction of cultural knowledge, while the longer-term preservation of local cultural identity remains dependent on broader social, cultural, and institutional processes.

4. Assessment

The findings concerning the evaluation dimension indicate that the Generation Z participants tended to be open to public responses to the cultural content they shared through digital media. They demonstrated an ability to distinguish between constructive feedback and feedback that was less relevant, and to use feedback considered useful as a basis for evaluating and improving the quality of subsequent content. Their reflective engagement with audience responses shows that digital literacy in cultural content production involves not only the ability to produce and disseminate information, but also the capacity to assess and respond critically to information and feedback received. Evaluation consequently formed part of the participants' content-production process, as they assessed the relevance of audience responses and incorporated appropriate suggestions into subsequent content. Audience feedback thus became a resource for learning, refinement, and continued participation in digital cultural practices.

These practices provide a more nuanced view of digital literacy, extending its meaning beyond technical abilities to include reflective judgement, selective engagement with information, and learning through interaction with audiences.

This interpretation is consistent with Rijali's (2018) view of the importance of analytical and evaluative abilities in understanding and processing information. However, the correspondence should not be taken to imply a direct causal relationship. Rather, the present study illustrates how evaluative processes were manifested in the participants' specific experiences of producing and sharing cultural content online. Their relevance to Generation Z's digital literacy is therefore best understood within the particular social, cultural, and digital contexts in which the participants engaged.

5. Sanctions

Interview findings show that some members of Generation Z who produce cultural content have received criticism of the work they share through digital media. Such criticism was not necessarily perceived as a form of rejection; rather, it was also used as a basis for reflection to evaluate and improve the quality of the cultural content they produced. This response suggests a tendency to engage with negative feedback constructively and to use it as an impetus for developing subsequent work. More importantly, these responses indicate that audience feedback can become part of an ongoing process of reflection and content refinement, rather than being treated simply as a positive or negative judgement. By selectively considering criticism and incorporating relevant feedback into subsequent content, the participants demonstrated an evaluative approach to their digital cultural practices.

In the context of digital literacy and cultural preservation, this practice suggests that digital competence extends beyond the technical ability to produce and disseminate cultural content to include the capacity to interpret feedback, exercise judgement, and make informed adjustments to subsequent cultural productions. This finding therefore highlights the reflective dimension of digital cultural participation, in which engagement with audiences can contribute to the continuous development of both content quality and the ways in which cultural meanings are communicated in digital spaces. The findings further indicate that Generation Z may function as adaptive and responsible cultural actors in the digital environment, particularly when their cultural production is accompanied by critical reflection and awareness of their responsibilities in representing and disseminating cultural knowledge online.

Overall, the findings support and contextually extend Role Theory across its five dimensions. Role expectations were reflected in Gen Z's view of social media as a space for introducing and promoting Palembang's local culture. Role norms appeared in their attention to authenticity, polite language, and cultural values when producing content. Role performance, the strongest dimension, was

evident in their active creation and dissemination of cultural content on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Role assessment was shown in the way they selected and evaluated audience responses to improve content quality. The sanctions dimension was only partially supported, because the data mainly captured how informants responded to criticism rather than broader social consequences such as rewards or rejection. Taken together, these findings suggest that digital literacy is not merely a technical competence but also a means through which Generation Z enacts its social role in promoting and maintaining the visibility of local cultural identity on social media.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicate that the Generation Z participants in this study demonstrated a relatively high level of digital literacy, with a mean score of 4.2, which, based on the categorisation criteria of the research instrument, falls within the very good category. This score reflects the participants' ability to access, evaluate, and manage information, including content related to local culture on social media. The findings also show that the participants' use of digital technologies was not limited to technical skills, but also involved consideration of the relevance of information and the cultural values they communicated in digital environments. Thus, within the context of this study, the participants were not merely consumers of information, but were also involved in selecting, processing, and communicating cultural information through digital media.

This involvement was evident in the participants' activities in producing and sharing cultural content across various platforms, including Instagram and TikTok. The content they produced included representations of traditional food and clothing, historical information, and various cultural practices and customs through which they introduced Palembang's cultural heritage to wider audiences. In doing so, the participants also demonstrated attention to ethical considerations in content production, including the authenticity of cultural information, the use of appropriate language, and the potential impact of their content on others. These practices show that digital literacy, as reflected in the participants' experiences, involves more than technological proficiency; it also encompasses the capacity to consider social and ethical dimensions in the use and production of information.

Overall, the findings reveal a relationship between digital literacy, cultural content production, and participation in local cultural preservation within the experiences examined in this study. The ability to select, evaluate, process, and communicate cultural information through digital media provides participants

with opportunities to contribute to the promotion and continued visibility of Palembang's cultural heritage in digital environments. In theoretical terms, the findings support and contextually extend Role Theory by showing that digital literacy enables Generation Z to enact its social role in promoting local culture, although the sanctions dimension was only partially supported and warrants further investigation. However, such involvement is more appropriately understood as one form of participation in cultural preservation rather than as evidence that the preservation of cultural identity has been fully achieved. Social media can provide a space for younger generations to introduce, communicate, and reproduce cultural knowledge, while the continuity of local cultural identity remains influenced by a range of social, cultural, educational, and institutional factors.

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