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Transformation of Cultural Values among Digital Generations Z and Alpha within the Ukrainian socio-cultural context

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Abstract

The rapid development of neural networks and their integration into everyday life are reshaping cultural processes and redefining the competencies required for effective participation in the digital environment. Adaptability, critical thinking, resilience, and media literacy have become essential for navigating increasingly complex information ecosystems. This study examines the impact of digitalization on socio-cultural dynamics and the transformation of cultural values among new generations. The research employs a systemic and interdisciplinary methodological framework based on historical-philosophical and philosophical-cultural approaches, complemented by methods of systems analysis, synthesis, comparison, and generalization. The findings demonstrate that global digitalization simultaneously expands opportunities for cultural communication and creativity while generating risks related to identity fragmentation, excessive dependence on virtual environments, and the erosion of authentic social

interaction. The study argues that artificial intelligence and algorithm-driven platforms increasingly influence perceptions of reality, freedom, individuality, and collective values, thereby creating new ethical challenges concerning responsibility, autonomy, and cultural diversity. Particular attention is devoted to the philosophical implications of AI for human identity, epistemological change, and the transformation of social structures in the digital era. The results of the study have significant educational significance: they substantiate the need to develop critical thinking skills, media literacy, and the ability to reflect on cultural identity in the digital environment in the educational system. This is especially relevant for digital generations (Z, Alpha), who consume music and media content as the main tools of self-identification. Educational programs should integrate an analysis of the impact of social networks, algorithms, and neural networks on the formation of values, as well as develop resistance to manipulative narratives in the media space.

Keywords: cultural values, cultural identity, national identity, digitalization, digital education, media literacy at school, pedagogy of digital culture.

Introduction

In the modern world, when Russia's aggression against Ukraine has forced many Ukrainians to leave their homeland, Ukrainian culture remains the only all-Ukrainian achievement and a factor in determining national identity. At the same time, Kremlin propaganda actively uses tools of hybrid informational and psychological pressure in the media environment on Ukrainian society, which are aimed at inciting internal national, cultural-linguistic and religious hostility. Information warfare aims to weaken moral resources and is a component of the system of ideological confrontation, the formation of a certain category of society that perceives the promoted narratives as the truth. The modern concept of Russian propaganda is based on a number of tools, including disinformation, manipulative narratives, and the promotion of the idea of state bilingualism. In such a situation, the cultural sphere acts not only as a tool of artistic communication and strengthening national identity, but also as an effective means of influencing public consciousness and countering disinformation attacks.

If we think more globally, the dominance of digital services increases the threat of influencing people's social perception of themselves and others, which can lead to the loss of national and cultural identity. The transformation of cultural values of digital generations (zoomers, millennials, generation Alpha) requires special attention, because currently media and music are positioned as the main tools for forming identities, and young people themselves lack critical thinking and media literacy. New challenges of modernity, including artificial intelligence, necessitate a rethinking of

the significance of the virtual world for effective collaboration in the cultural environment.

To avoid overgeneralizing the concepts of "digital generations" and "cultural values", this study focuses specifically on the two youngest cohorts – Generation Z (born 1997–2012) and Generation Alpha (born 2013–2025) – in the contemporary Ukrainian sociocultural context. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of "liquid modernity," Manuel Castells' theory of the network society, and Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "digital habitus," we explore the transformation of a clearly defined set of cultural values: national identity, linguistic loyalty, social trust (especially toward media and institutions), and ethical attitudes toward inclusivity and authenticity. This theoretical lens allows us to move beyond technological determinism and see how young people actively negotiate, appropriate, and sometimes resist the algorithmic and networked environments they are immersed in. Through these three theoretical traditions, the article not only notes changes but also explains the mechanisms that drive the restructuring of values.

Literature Review

As a result of research into the multifactorial impact of digital media, social networks and artificial intelligence on the dynamics of cultural values, Kulyniak (2022) found that new media contribute to the consolidation of interlingual ties through the exchange of information and experience. Akil et al. (2024), Bourreau et al. (2022) found that digital media include components-methods for implementing emotional, evaluative and expressive components of speech, and concluded that vocabulary used aptly in a comment or post on social networks is rapidly gaining popularity and is spread by users. This makes it possible, among other things, to spread the manipulative context.

The publications of Bryhider (2025), Jamalova (2024), Lozic & Cikovic (2023) are considered relevant, where an in-depth study of cultural and value dynamics in digital media is conducted. Scientists have analyzed a number of innovative media practices and found that cultural innovations spread most rapidly through social networks. In particular, hashtags help to increase the visibility of publications, attract a new audience, promote the necessary narratives and participate in discussions or challenges. According to the authors, modern neural networks have a significant impact on the formation of personality, offering new forms of self-expression and at the same time risks to the stability of the human "I".

The issues under study were devoted to the conceptual publications of Brusila et al. (2022), Manara & Weber (2023), Wijaya (2023). The authors note that cultural identity directly affects national stability, and the introduction of digital technologies into the cultural space changes the format of preserving cultural heritage.

The scientific research of industry researchers is focused on current trends in the dynamics of Russian propaganda and best practices in the field of countering

manipulative influence. In particular, Hurova & Shkurov (2023), Osipova et al. (2025) investigate the key narratives of Russian political propaganda and media discourse, their dynamics after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, analyze the key messages of Russian propaganda as an element of hybrid influence on Ukrainian society. At the same time, scientists note that the digital space allows us to rethink and adapt traditional cultural norms to the conditions of combined communication, which is visual and fast.

Without belittling the achievements of scientists, it is necessary to note the low level of research into the evolution of markers of cultural values in the content of the modern digital media space, which requires additional efforts of theoretical and practical scientific direction. The main goal of the study is an expanded analysis of the impact of digitalization on socio-cultural dynamics and changes in the cultural values of new generations.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the format of a systematic narrative review of literature published in 2020–2025, supplemented by a conceptual analysis of key philosophical and sociological theories. A structured search was carried out in the Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases using combinations of keywords: “digital generations AND cultural values”, “Gen Z identity AND social media”, “media literacy AND national identity”, “algorithmic culture AND youth”, “Ukrainian digital culture AND war”. Inclusion criteria:

1) peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, and authoritative analytical reports;

2) direct focus on cultural or value transformations among youth in the digital environment;

3) publications in English or Ukrainian. After removing duplicates and selecting by annotations, 78 sources were left for full-text analysis.

The synthesis was conducted using thematic analysis; recurring patterns are grouped into three cross-cutting themes:

a) identity construction and self-presentation;

b) trust, media literacy and resistance to disinformation;

c) the tension between global digital culture and the preservation of national culture.

To support the quantitative statements presented in the “Results” section, secondary data from authoritative Ukrainian sociological surveys (Gradus Research, Opora, U-Report) were also used.

To solve the tasks set in the work, a set of general scientific and special research methods was used:

– retrospective analysis – to study the state of scientific development of the problem of the impact of digitalization on the development of cultural practices;

– analysis and synthesis – to study national and cultural identity, which could serve as the basis for determining positive and negative factors influencing the transformation of cultural values in digital generations;

– generalization and systematization – to systematize the conceptual and categorical apparatus and determine key categories and concepts;

– statistical and predictive research – to study the state of development of the media space, the level of trust in content, etc.;

– generalization and grouping – to highlight key narratives related to cultural identity and the digital environment, the author of the definition of positive and negative factors of influence in the context of the transformation of cultural values in digital generations;

– graphic method – for visual generalization of information.

Results

Social transformations lead to changes in the worldview, values, and way of interacting with people, because information technologies affect the understanding of individuality, reality, freedom, and social interaction, forming digital identity, blurring the boundaries between the virtual and real worlds. These same technologies actualize issues of freedom and privacy, digital inequality, manipulation, and ethics. Given the global trend of digitalization of society, information messages are becoming more accessible to a wide audience of consumers. In particular, social networks have become an effective tool for representing the necessary information and its easy assimilation by consumers (Onyejelem & Aondover, 2024; Ren et al., 2024; Popovych et al., 2023).

Virtual communication provides more freedom. This freedom refers to ethical and value characteristics, which implies the absence of barriers in cultural priorities; cognitive characteristics, which allow for a wider use of information resources; emotional characteristics, which involves reducing stress through gamification, using the “stream of consciousness” in writing, transferring fears and complexes to the virtual plane. The most important aspect of communication is presenting yourself to the other, presenting your image, beliefs, interests, feelings, etc. Self-presentation becomes ontologically important, since in the information world, life functions according to the principle: if you are not online, you do not exist.

Importantly, this transformation is not a one-sided imposition of technology on passive users. Ukrainian buzzers and Generation Alphas are not simply consuming algorithmic content; they are actively curating their own digital selves, creating hybrid cultural forms (for example, combining folk motifs with hyperpop or lo-fi aesthetics), and using social media to resist manipulative narratives. Hashtag

campaigns like #UkrainianMusic or #SingUkrainian, viral TikTok challenges reimagining traditional songs, and youth fact-checking initiatives on Telegram all demonstrate a high level of subjectivity. This is consistent with Castells' idea of "mass self-communication", where young people produce and disseminate their own cultural symbols, changing value systems from within. In this dialectical process, digital tools are not just an external force that erodes identity, but also a means of strengthening national belonging and ethical consciousness, provided that media literacy and critical thinking are sufficiently developed.

Thus, society is currently at the stage of radical transformations, which can change the trajectory of development in the context of greater interactivity and the influence of digital technologies. The key aspects of these processes are: changing human identity and the concept of freedom, rethinking reality, changes in the social structure, epistemological problems. In a philosophical sense, the potential of artificial intelligence and digitalization in the context of influencing the development of society is endowed with a dualistic character. It forms both a space of opportunities and a space of threats. All this directly affects the formation of cultural values of new generations (Asih et al., 2024; Spennemann, 2023; Stender et al., 2024).

The cultural policy of the Ukrainian media field is assigned a key role in strengthening the national-linguistic identity of society and de-Russification of the information space. At the same time, the inertia of language habits of part of society remains a challenge, which justifies the need for further measures to Ukrainize the media space, support independent media professionals, and introduce programs to form critical thinking and media literacy into the educational system (Shevchenko et al., 2023; Abdurahman et al., 2025). At the same time, at the international level, the legal foundations for the protection of cultural heritage were laid back in 1954 by the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. In general, three main groups of cultural assets can be distinguished in the current digital context:

Cultural values transformed into digital format open up new opportunities for popularizing cultural heritage among young people and a wider audience. Such potential areas include digital copies of architectural monuments, virtual galleries of paintings and sculptures, digitized texts, databases, static and moving images, audio, video, graphics, software, etc. (Wang & Shao, 2024; Byrkovych et al., 2023).

It was digital capabilities that allowed Ukrainians not to lose their national and cultural identity under the influence of other cultures during emigration due to war events. In general, the need of Ukrainians abroad to maintain contact with the Ukrainian space through the digital environment – the Internet – was 70.6% (Figure 1).

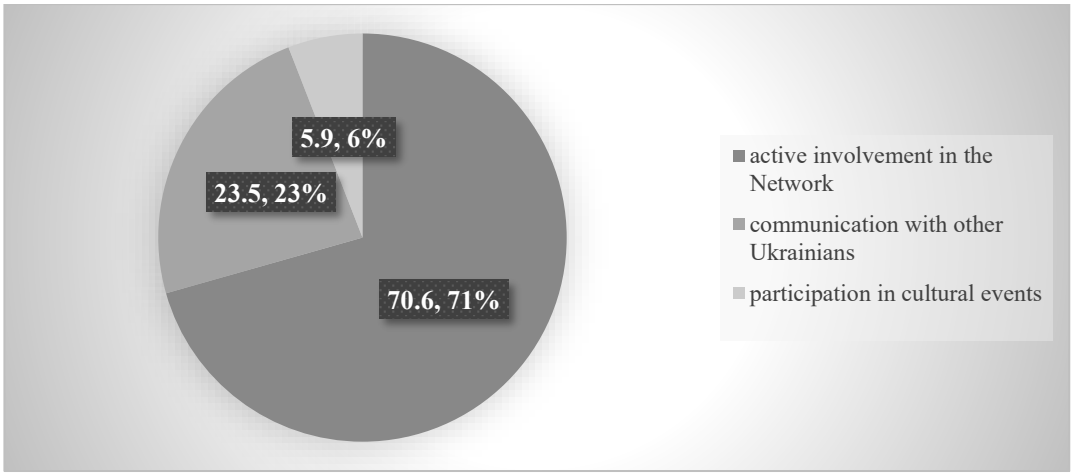

Figure 1. The nature of the relationship between forced immigrants and the Ukrainian cultural space

Source: (Uryss & Bibik, 2025)

At the same time, the study (Demchuk, 2025) notes that according to a survey of 4,667 young people aged 14 to 35, 89.9% of respondents most often consume cultural content in the Ukrainian language. This situation indicates the importance of digital communications in maintaining contact with the Ukrainian cultural space.

At the same time, the active integration of digital technologies into all spheres of human life has led to the emergence of a new type of culture – digital culture, endowed with the ability to level space-time restrictions. The key trends in the development of this digital culture and its impact on young people can be summarized as follows:

1) musical art serves as an effective means of self-identification of the younger generation, a marker of their values; at the same time, fundamentally different styles of music that were previously considered incompatible are combined (for example, hip-hop with electronic music), which indicates the level of acceptance and openness, the opposition of local versus global, the growing importance of music as a way of asserting one's own cultural and national identity (De Notaris & Savonardo, 2022; Guo, 2023; Krap et al., 2024);

2) the perception of reality and ethics by generations z and Alpha has been influenced by "clip thinking" and the democratization of media content, with social networks being the most popular sources of content consumption (Figure 2).

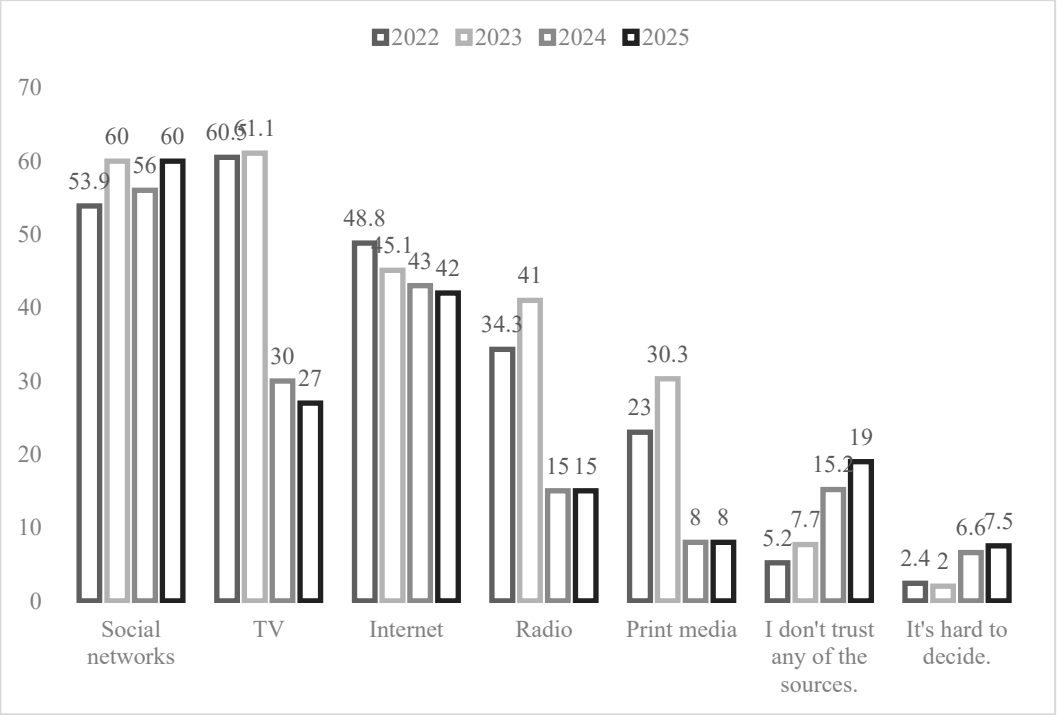

Figure 2. Dynamics of Ukrainian society's trust in media resources during the Ukrainian –Russian war, %

Source: (Opora, 2024; Gradus Research Company, 2025)

3) media content actively participates in the formation of a "new ethic": promoting the values of inclusivity, mental health, and environmental awareness; influencers actively raise important social issues, which is more important for a young audience than official sources (Tirocchi, 2024).

Information overload, as well as the continuous absorption of a large number of diverse news in a short period of time, can cause considerable harm to the younger generation. Against the backdrop of a protracted hidden information war, it is important to develop media literacy and critical thinking of the Ukrainian public, as well as continue to upgrade the educational sphere (Muttaqin et al., 2023; Potwora et al., 2024).

Media literacy is defined as the ability of citizens to critically evaluate information messages, distinguish between reliable sources, and identify manipulations and fakes. Improving media literacy is one of the strategic directions of state information policy, ensuring the formation of a conscious, propaganda-resistant society.

In today's conditions of full-scale war, this category is considered an element of national security and civic culture. The relevance of the problem is increasing due to

the digital transformation of the media environment, the growing influence of social networks, and the lack of proper institutional, legal, and managerial support for these processes (Costa et al., 2022; Dewdney & Sluis, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

The analysis conducted shows that the modern education system does not fully take into account the specifics of the impact of digitalization on the value orientations of young people.

First, traditional curricula in cultural studies, music and media education are often limited to the transfer of knowledge about cultural heritage without taking into account the fact that digital generations (Z, Alpha) perceive culture mainly through screens, social networks and music streaming platforms. This requires a revision of the content of education: it is necessary to include an analysis of how recommendation algorithms, neural networks (ChatGPT, Midjourney, etc.) and clip thinking change the perception of art, history and national identity.

Second, the results of the study emphasize the need for the systematic development of media literacy and critical thinking as cross-cutting competencies in educational programs at all levels (from primary school to higher education institutions). In particular, it is worth implementing practical classes on recognizing manipulative narratives in music videos, comments, trending songs, and viral content. This forms not only media hygiene, but also a conscious attitude towards how digital content constructs cultural values and social norms.

Third, educational policy in Ukraine should take into account the need to counter Russian propaganda in the digital space through special training modules for teachers and students. Such modules may include an analysis of typical disinformation scenarios in TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, as well as the study of historical and cultural contexts that destroy narratives about “common cultural roots” and “brotherly peoples”.

Fourth, the study found that music for digital generations is a powerful means of self-identification and transmission of values. Accordingly, music education should go beyond learning to play instruments – it should include analysis of contemporary song lyrics, genre hybrids, the role of digital sound in the formation of emotional intelligence and belonging to a cultural community. It is advisable to supplement music-pedagogical programs with courses on “Digital Sound Engineering and Cultural Senses” or “Music Journalism in Social Media”.

Finally, to achieve sustainable results, it is necessary to create educational ecosystems of partnerships between schools, universities, public organizations (such as Gwara Media) and cultural institutions. Joint development of educational materials, conducting fact-checking trainings and workshops on the analysis of digital culture will allow preparing a generation capable of critically evaluating content, preserving national identity and ethically using the capabilities of artificial intelligence.

Without negating a number of positive factors of digitalization that affect the transformation of cultural values among digital generations (Table 1), bringing cultural heritage to Ukrainians for the purpose of self-awareness of their identity should be carried out not only by enthusiasts, but primarily with the participation of the state, which should take on the financing of projects for the digitization of architectural monuments, the creation of films about the formation and struggle of the Ukrainian people for independence, the publication of thematic artistic and documentary works, the creation of virtual art galleries of Ukrainian artists, etc. (Zort et al., 2023; Bielialov et al., 2023).

Table 1. Key factors influencing the impact of digitalization on the cultural values of the younger generation

Factor	*Nature of influence*	*Initiatives*
Digitization of cultural heritage	positive	Access to cultural heritage in virtual space (architectural monuments, works of art, films, current information, etc.)
Leveling the spatio-temporal aspect	positive	Quick access to a large number of compatriots with the ability to simultaneously communicate with a whole group of people, even with those who are currently unavailable
Creating communities in the digital space	positive	the opportunity to easily learn about other cultures by sharing photos, videos, and stories from your own life and the lives of your compatriots on social networks
No restrictions for global communication	positive	constant expansion of the audience, leading to broad intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange
Cybersecurity	negative	Vulnerability of the digital spatial system – manipulation factor
Regulatory and institutional influence	negative	the possibility of banning the use of digital space tools in totalitarian regimes
Technical imperfection	negative	inability to use virtual space for technical reasons – long power outages, natural disasters

Source: generated by the author

In the context of rapid digitalization, it is important to ensure access to information and communication technologies for all states, regardless of their level of economic development. Otherwise, a new format of global inequality will be formed, where some countries will be able to shape the rules of the game in cyberspace, while others will be forced to passively accept them. That is why the international community should invest in the development of cyber capabilities of developing countries, provide them with technical assistance, personnel training, knowledge and technology transfer (Wu et al., 2024). Such an approach will contribute to the formation of an inclusive, secure and sustainable digital ecosystem that will meet the interests of all states.

Countering disinformation is not only a technical task, but also a humanitarian mission that requires educational efforts, awareness-raising, and increasing the media literacy of the population. An example of the effectiveness of involving innovative digital tools in fact-checking processes is the Ukrainian initiative – the Perevirka chatbot, which automatically recognizes the type of information, differentiates it, filters spam, compensating for the limited time resources of journalists. The bot operates within the framework of the successful Gwara Media platform (Gwara Media, 2025), which specializes in countering disinformation. The Gwara Media concept is based on the potential consequences of fakes on people''s behavior - wrong decisions, panic, etc. The company's activities have received numerous positive reviews at the international level (Free Media Award, Eurozine, and others), and the fact-check department is a member of the International Fact-Checking Network IFCN.

Conclusions

Society is currently at the stage of radical transformations, which can change the trajectory of cultural development in the context of greater interactivity and the influence of digital technologies. The key aspects of these processes are: changing human identity and the concept of freedom, rethinking reality, changes in the social structure, epistemological problems. In a philosophical sense, the potential of digital technologies in the context of influencing the cultural development of society is endowed with a dualistic character. It forms both a space of opportunities and a space of threats: it provides access to cultural heritage in virtual space with the possibility of simultaneous communication with a large community of people, contributes to the strengthening of self-identity, while being accompanied by technical limitations, cyber threats, risks of cultural globalization, with the loss of national and cultural identity, the vulnerability of the digital space system as a factor of manipulation.

The new type of identity has a high level of dynamism with an advantage of visually-oriented content over textual content. With the increase in the amount of information available from all sides, this new type of identity seeks authentic experience in the “noise”. It is obvious that modern algorithms and virtual reality can potentially lead to a destructive transformation of the personality, excessive absorption by the digital

environment, loss of identity. Based on the justification of the philosophical principles of responsible use of technologies, specific ethical principles for their integration into modern algorithms can be identified: respect, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and human dignity; prevention of threats of depersonalization, discrimination, oppression; ensuring diversity and choice; safety and security; protection of personal data; sustainability of social development; promotion of cultural and national identity.

There is also a need to strengthen control over the information space, including by controlling communication and promoting manipulative narratives in social networks. The prospective improvement of cultural digital policy in Ukraine should be focused on the expanded integration of the Ukrainian language, the popularization of national culture, and the support of high-quality Ukrainian-language content in the media space. In addition, a key strategic priority should be the systematic integration of media literacy, critical thinking, and analysis of digital cultural transformations into curricula at all levels – from general secondary education to higher education institutions. Only by raising a generation capable of deconstructing manipulative narratives, realizing the value of cultural identity, and using digital tools responsibly, Ukraine will be able to ensure the sustainability of its national culture in the face of ongoing hybrid aggression and global digitalization.

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