

International Youth Engagement in Social Change through Digital Media: A Systematic Qualitative Review from Management and Cultural Exchange Perspectives

Achref Boubekri *, Tasya Aspiranti

Doctor of Management Student Faculty of Economics and Business, Bandung
Islamic University, Bandung, Indonesia.

achrefboubekri@gmail.com, tasya@unisba.ac.id

Abstract. This study explores international youth engagement in social change through digital media by adopting a management and cultural exchange perspective. The growing reliance of young people on digital platforms for civic, social, and organizational activities has reshaped how social change initiatives are formed, coordinated, and sustained, particularly in transnational contexts. Despite the expanding body of literature on digital youth participation, existing research remains fragmented and often overlooks the managerial and intercultural dimensions of such engagement. To address this gap, this study aims to systematically synthesize qualitative evidence on how international youth utilize digital media to engage in social change and how managerial practices and cultural exchange processes shape these initiatives. A systematic qualitative review was conducted following PRISMA guidelines, drawing on peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. The identification process yielded 218 records, which were screened and refined to 60 eligible studies for in depth qualitative synthesis. The findings reveal that digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and YouTube function as enabling infrastructures for youth engagement, facilitating community building, advocacy, and collective mobilization across cultural boundaries. The results further indicate that youth-led digital initiatives are characterized by distributed leadership, informal coordination, and adaptive management practices, while cultural exchange plays a central role in shaping interaction, identity negotiation, and collaboration. These findings contribute to existing knowledge by integrating youth empowerment, digital social movement, and cross cultural management perspectives, offering a holistic understanding of digitally mediated youth engagement. The study concludes that international youth engagement in social change through digital media is a dynamic process that simultaneously generates opportunities for social impact, managerial learning, and intercultural exchange, while also presenting challenges related to sustainability and coordination.

Keywords: *International youth, cultural exchange, management perspectives.*

A. Introduction

Youth have long been recognized as a driving force in social transformation; however, the nature, scale, and mechanisms of their engagement have undergone significant changes in the digital era. The rapid expansion of digital media platforms has reshaped how young people access information, communicate ideas, and mobilize collective action. Social change initiatives led by youth are no longer confined to physical communities or formal organizational settings but increasingly unfold within digitally mediated environments that enable continuous interaction across borders and cultures (1). These developments have positioned digital media as a central arena for youth engagement, particularly for international youth who operate within transnational social and cultural contexts.

Digital media platforms have transformed traditional patterns of participation by lowering barriers to engagement and enabling diverse forms of involvement, ranging from information sharing and advocacy to coordinated collective action. For youth, these platforms provide spaces to articulate social concerns, construct shared meanings, and develop networks that support social change initiatives. Unlike conventional channels of participation, digital media allow youth to engage flexibly and autonomously, often outside institutional control, while still achieving significant social visibility and influence. This shift has altered the dynamics of participation, emphasizing engagement, interaction, and collaboration rather than formal membership or hierarchical structures (2).

The increasing prominence of international youth engagement through digital media is closely linked to broader processes of globalization and internationalization. International students and globally mobile youth frequently navigate multiple cultural, social, and institutional environments simultaneously. Digital platforms serve as critical spaces where these individuals maintain transnational connections, exchange cultural perspectives, and participate in social initiatives that transcend national boundaries (3). Through such interactions, digital media facilitate not only social activism but also ongoing cultural exchange that shapes how social issues are understood and addressed within diverse contexts.

From an organizational and management perspective, youth engagement in digital social change represents an emerging form of collective action that challenges traditional models of organization and leadership. Digital platforms function as informal organizational infrastructures that support coordination, decision-making, and resource mobilization without relying on formal authority structures (4). Youth led initiatives often exhibit fluid leadership roles, participatory governance, and adaptive strategies, reflecting managerial practices that are dynamic and context-dependent.

Understanding these processes is essential for assessing how digital youth engagement can be sustained and scaled over time (5).

At the same time, the integration of cultural exchange into digitally mediated youth engagement adds an additional layer of complexity. Participation in international digital spaces requires continuous negotiation of cultural norms, communication styles, and values. Youth engaged in social change must navigate cultural diversity while building shared goals and collective identities within digital environments (6). These intercultural interactions influence how social issues are framed, how collaboration is managed, and how social impact is evaluated, particularly in initiatives involving international youth and students.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in youth participation, digital media, and social change, existing research remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries. Studies often focus on political participation, communication practices, or technological affordances in isolation, with limited attention to the managerial and organizational dimensions of youth led digital initiatives (7). Similarly, research on cultural exchange tends to be situated within education or intercultural communication fields, with less emphasis on its role in shaping digital forms of social engagement. As a result, there is a lack of integrative perspectives that examine how management processes and cultural exchange jointly influence international youth engagement in digital social change.

Moreover, much of the existing literature relies on context specific case studies or quantitative approaches that capture participation patterns but provide limited insight into the underlying processes of engagement and organization. While these studies offer valuable empirical evidence, they often fail to synthesize qualitative insights across contexts to identify broader patterns, shared challenges, and emerging practices (8). This limitation is particularly evident in research addressing international youth, whose experiences are shaped by diverse cultural, institutional, and socio economic environments.

In response to these gaps, there is a growing need for systematic qualitative approaches that integrate findings from multiple studies to develop a more comprehensive understanding of international youth engagement in digital social change. Such approaches allow for the identification of recurring themes, conceptual developments, and practical implications that extend beyond individual contexts (9). By synthesizing qualitative evidence, researchers can better capture the complexity of youth engagement as a socially embedded and managerially organized phenomenon.

Accordingly, this study seeks to examine international youth engagement in social change through digital media by conducting a systematic qualitative review of relevant literature. The review focuses specifically on management and cultural exchange perspectives in order to explore how youth led digital initiatives are organized, coordinated, and sustained across diverse cultural settings. By analyzing studies published between 2016 and 2025, this research aims to provide a structured and integrative overview of the field, identify key thematic patterns, and highlight implications for management scholarship, educational institutions, and organizations supporting youth driven social change.

Youth Engagement in Social Change

Youth engagement has been widely discussed in the literature as a multidimensional concept that extends beyond traditional notions of participation. Rather than viewing youth as passive recipients of social structures, contemporary research conceptualizes them as active agents capable of initiating, shaping, and sustaining social change processes (10). Engagement, in this sense,

encompasses cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, reflecting young people's commitment to social issues, their sense of agency, and their willingness to collaborate with others to achieve collective goals (11).

In the context of social change, youth engagement is often associated with collective action, civic involvement, and grassroots initiatives that challenge existing social norms and power structures. Studies highlight that youth-led social change initiatives tend to prioritize inclusivity, horizontal collaboration, and value-driven action, distinguishing them from more formalized organizational models (12). These characteristics are particularly evident in initiatives operating within digital environments, where engagement is fluid, network-based, and continuously negotiated.

International youth engagement introduces additional complexity, as young people operate across multiple cultural, institutional, and social contexts. Research indicates that internationally mobile youth and students often develop hybrid forms of engagement that draw on diverse cultural experiences and transnational networks (13). Such engagement is shaped not only by individual motivations but also by the broader socio cultural environments in which digital interactions occur.

Digital Media and Social Change

Digital media have been extensively examined as catalysts for social change, particularly in relation to youth engagement. The affordances of digital platforms such as connectivity, visibility, scalability, and persistence enable youth to disseminate ideas rapidly, mobilize supporters, and coordinate actions across geographical boundaries (14). Unlike traditional media, digital platforms facilitate two way communication and collective sense making, which are essential for sustaining engagement over time.

Empirical studies demonstrate that digital media support a wide range of social change activities, including awareness campaigns, advocacy, community organizing, and social entrepreneurship (15). For youth, these platforms provide accessible spaces for experimentation, learning, and identity construction, allowing them to engage with social issues in ways that align with their values and lived experiences (16). However, the literature also highlights challenges associated with digital engagement, such as information overload, performative activism, and unequal access to digital resources.

From a managerial standpoint, digital media function as socio technical systems that structure how collective action is organized and governed. The design of platforms influences participation patterns, leadership emergence, and decision making processes within youth-led initiatives (17). As such, digital media are not neutral tools but active components shaping the dynamics of social change.

Management Perspectives on Youth Led Digital Initiatives

Management scholarship offers valuable insights into how youth engagement in digital social change can be understood as an organizational phenomenon. Youth led initiatives operating through digital platforms often resemble informal or emergent organizations characterized by flexible structures, distributed leadership, and adaptive strategies (18). These initiatives rely on coordination mechanisms such as shared narratives, digital norms, and relational trust rather than formal hierarchies.

Research on collaborative and participatory management emphasizes the importance of shared leadership and collective decision making in sustaining engagement within decentralized contexts (19). In digital youth initiatives, leadership frequently shifts based on expertise, availability, and situational demands, reflecting a dynamic form of management that contrasts with traditional command and control models (20). Such flexibility allows youth led initiatives to respond quickly to emerging social issues but also poses challenges related to accountability and continuity.

In addition, studies highlight the role of strategic management in aligning digital engagement with broader social impact goals. Effective youth led initiatives often combine values driven action with pragmatic considerations such as resource mobilization, stakeholder engagement, and long-term sustainability (21). These managerial dimensions are critical for transforming digital engagement into meaningful and lasting social change.

Cultural Exchange and Intercultural Dynamics in Digital Engagement

Cultural exchange plays a central role in shaping international youth engagement in digital social change. Digital platforms facilitate continuous intercultural interaction, enabling youth from diverse backgrounds to share perspectives, negotiate meanings, and co construct social initiatives. This process of exchange influences how social problems are framed, how solutions are proposed, and how collaboration is managed across cultural boundaries.

The literature on intercultural communication suggests that effective engagement in culturally diverse digital environments requires intercultural competence, including openness, reflexivity, and the ability to navigate cultural differences (22). For international youth, digital engagement often becomes a site for learning and identity negotiation, where cultural values are both expressed and transformed through interaction (23).

However, cultural exchange within digital spaces is not without tension. Power asymmetries, language barriers, and differing cultural norms can shape participation dynamics and influence whose voices are amplified or marginalized (24). Understanding these dynamics is essential for analyzing how international youth engagement unfolds within digital social change initiatives.

Theoretical Foundations

To systematically analyze international youth engagement in social change through digital media, this study draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives.

First, Youth Empowerment Theory emphasizes the role of agency, participation, and capacity building in enabling youth to influence social outcomes. This theory highlights how access to resources, supportive environments, and opportunities for meaningful participation enhance youth's ability to drive social change((25); updated applications discussed in (26)).

Second, Social Movement Theory, particularly networked and digital extensions of the theory, provides a framework for understanding how collective action emerges and is sustained through digitally mediated networks. Scholars argue that digital platforms facilitate loosely structured movements that rely on shared identities and collective framing rather than formal organization (27)(28). These insights are crucial for analyzing youth led digital initiatives as forms of networked social movements.

Third, Cross Cultural Management Theory offers tools for examining how cultural differences influence coordination, leadership, and collaboration within international digital initiatives. This perspective emphasizes the role of cultural values, communication styles, and contextual sensitivity in shaping managerial practices across cultures (29)(30). Applying this theory allows for a nuanced understanding of how cultural exchange affects youth engagement and organizational dynamics in digital contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical perspectives, Figure 1 below shows that this study proposes a theoretical framework that conceptualizes international youth engagement in social change as a digitally mediated process shaped by managerial and cultural dynamics. In this framework: Digital Media Platforms function as enabling infrastructures that facilitate communication, coordination, and visibility. Youth Engagement represents the central process, encompassing participation, leadership, and collaborative action. Management Processes (e.g., coordination, leadership distribution, strategic alignment) shape how engagement is organized and sustained. Cultural Exchange acts as a contextual dimension influencing interaction, meaning-making, and collaboration across diverse cultural settings. Social Change Outcomes emerge as the result of interactions between these elements, reflected in social awareness, collective action, and community impact.

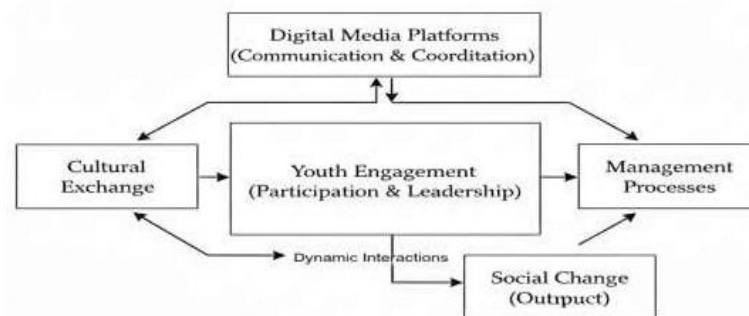


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Digital Youth Engagement in Social Change

The framework assumes dynamic and reciprocal relationships among these components, recognizing that digital engagement is both shaped by and reshapes managerial practices and cultural interactions over time.

B. Method

Research Design

This study adopts a systematic qualitative review methodology to examine international youth engagement in social change through digital media from management and cultural exchange perspectives. A systematic qualitative review was selected to enable a structured and transparent synthesis of existing qualitative evidence, allowing for the identification of recurring themes, conceptual patterns, and theoretical insights across diverse contexts. This approach is particularly suitable for interdisciplinary topics that span social sciences, management studies, and cultural research, where qualitative findings provide rich contextual understanding beyond quantitative trends.

The review process was guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework to ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability. PRISMA provides standardized procedures for identifying, screening, and selecting relevant studies, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing the credibility of the review findings.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted using two highly reputable and widely recognized academic databases: Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). These databases were selected due to their comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journals, high-quality indexing standards, and strong relevance to management, social sciences, and interdisciplinary research.

The search strategy was designed to capture studies addressing youth engagement, digital media, social change, management, and cultural exchange. A combination of keywords and Boolean operators was employed to ensure both breadth and relevance of the search. Keywords included variations of youth engagement, digital media, social change, management, international youth, and cultural exchange. The search was limited to articles published between 2016 and 2025 to reflect contemporary developments in digital engagement and social change.

Table 1. Databases and Search Strategy

Database	Search Scope	Keywords Used	Time Period
Scopus	Peer-reviewed journals	Youth engagement, digital media, social change, management, cultural exchange	2016–2025
Web of Science	Core Collection journals	International youth, digital platforms, social change, organizational dynamics	2016–2025

Study Selection Process (PRISMA)

The study selection process followed the four main stages recommended by the PRISMA framework: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion.

During the identification stage, an initial search of Scopus and Web of Science yielded a total of 218 records. Duplicate records were removed prior to screening. The screening stage involved reviewing titles and abstracts to assess relevance to the research focus, resulting in 113 records retained for further evaluation.

In the eligibility stage, full-text articles were assessed against predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. These criteria focused on relevance to international youth engagement, digital media, social change, management, or cultural exchange, as well as methodological suitability for qualitative synthesis. Following this assessment, 60 articles were deemed eligible and included in the final qualitative review.

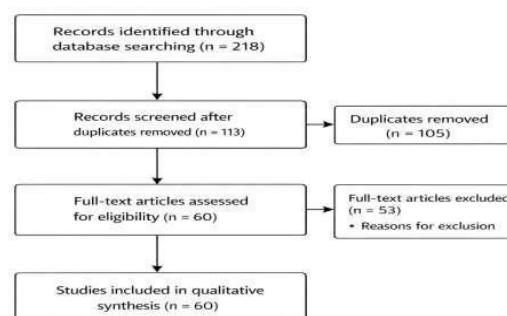
Table 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Type	Description
Inclusion	Peer-reviewed articles; qualitative or mixed-methods studies; focus on youth engagement and digital media; relevance to social change, management, or cultural exchange; published between 2016–2025
Exclusion	Non-peer-reviewed sources; purely quantitative studies; articles unrelated to youth or digital engagement; conference abstracts without full texts

Source: Authors' adaptation based on PRISMA 2020 guidelines

PRISMA Flow Diagram

The selection process is summarized using a PRISMA flow diagram, illustrating the progression of records through the different stages of the review. The diagram visually represents the transparency of the selection process and the reduction of studies at each stage.

**Figure 2.** Prisma Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

PRISMA Flow Summary:

Records identified through database searching: 218

Records screened after removing duplicates: 113

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility: 60

Studies included in qualitative synthesis: 60

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction was conducted systematically to ensure consistency across the selected studies. Key information extracted from each article included research objectives, methodological approaches, participant characteristics, digital platforms examined, and key findings related to youth engagement, management practices, and cultural exchange. A thematic analysis approach was employed to synthesize qualitative findings across studies.

This involved iterative coding and categorization to identify recurring themes and conceptual relationships. Themes were refined through constant comparison, allowing for the development of higher-order categories that reflect shared patterns across diverse contexts. This analytical process enabled the integration of management and cultural exchange perspectives into a coherent interpretive framework.

Methodological Rigor and Reliability

To enhance the rigor and reliability of the review, the study adhered to established systematic review protocols, including transparent documentation of search strategies, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures. The use of PRISMA guidelines ensured clarity and replicability, while the focus on peer-reviewed sources from Scopus and Web of Science strengthened the credibility of the evidence base.

C. Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative synthesis of the 60 eligible studies included in the systematic review. Through thematic analysis, recurring patterns and conceptual themes were identified that explain how international youth engage in social change through digital media from management and cultural exchange perspectives. The results are organized into four main themes, reflecting shared findings across diverse geographical and cultural contexts.

Overview of Selected Studies

The reviewed studies represent a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds, including management, communication studies, sociology, education, and intercultural studies. Most studies focused on youth and young adults aged between 18 and 30, with a significant proportion examining international students or transnational youth networks. Digital engagement was explored across multiple social media platforms, with Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube emerging as the most frequently analyzed platforms.

Table 3. Characteristics of the Reviewed Studies

Category	Dominant Trends Identified
Research focus	Youth engagement, digital activism, social change initiatives
Methodological approach	Qualitative interviews, digital ethnography, content analysis
Geographical scope	Global, with emphasis on Asia, Europe, and transnational contexts
Digital platforms	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), YouTube
Participant profile	International youth, university students, youth activists

Theme 1: Digital Media as an Enabling Infrastructure for Youth Engagement

Across the reviewed studies, digital media platforms were consistently described as enabling infrastructures that facilitate youth engagement in social change. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram were frequently used to disseminate information, organize events, and maintain community engagement, while TikTok emerged as a powerful tool for creative expression and rapid message diffusion among younger audiences. X (Twitter) was commonly associated with advocacy, political discourse, and real time mobilization.

The studies highlight that digital platforms lower barriers to participation by allowing youth to engage asynchronously and without formal organizational membership. This accessibility was particularly significant for international youth, who often face institutional, linguistic, or geographical constraints in offline participation. Digital media enabled these youth to remain engaged in social initiatives across borders, fostering continuity of involvement despite physical mobility.



Figure 3. Role of Social Media Platforms in Internasional Youth Engagement

Figure 3 showing how Facebook and Instagram support coordination and community building, TikTok facilitates creative advocacy and visibility, X (Twitter) enables political discourse and mobilization, and YouTube supports long form storytelling and awareness campaigns.

Theme 2: Managerial Dynamics in Youth Led Digital Initiatives

A prominent theme across the literature relates to the managerial dynamics underpinning youth led digital initiatives. Rather than relying on formal hierarchies, most initiatives exhibited distributed leadership and informal coordination mechanisms. Digital tools such as group chats, platform analytics, and content scheduling features were frequently used to support decision making, task allocation, and performance monitoring.

Several studies reported that youth engaged in strategic planning practices, including audience targeting, content management, and stakeholder communication, particularly on platforms like Instagram and Facebook. These practices reflect managerial competencies that develop organically through participation in digital social change initiatives. However, challenges related to sustainability, volunteer burnout, and coordination overload were also recurrent, especially in initiatives lacking long- term organizational structures.

Table 4. Managerial Practices Identified in Youth Digital Initiatives

Managerial Aspect	Qualitative Evidence from Reviewed Studies
Leadership	Shared and rotating leadership roles
Coordination	Use of digital tools for task allocation
Strategy	Content planning and audience engagement
Sustainability	Challenges in maintaining long-term engagement

Source: Authors' thematic analysis of qualitative findings from selected studies

Theme 3: Cultural Exchange and Intercultural Interaction in Digital Spaces

Cultural exchange emerged as a central dimension of international youth engagement in digital social change. The reviewed studies indicate that digital platforms function as intercultural spaces where youth negotiate meanings, values, and identities. International youth frequently engaged in discussions that reflected diverse cultural perspectives, particularly on global issues such as climate change, social justice, and human rights.

Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram were highlighted for enabling storytelling and visual narratives that convey cultural experiences and social realities. However, studies also noted challenges related to language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and unequal visibility of voices. These dynamics influenced participation patterns and shaped how social change initiatives were framed and perceived across cultural contexts.

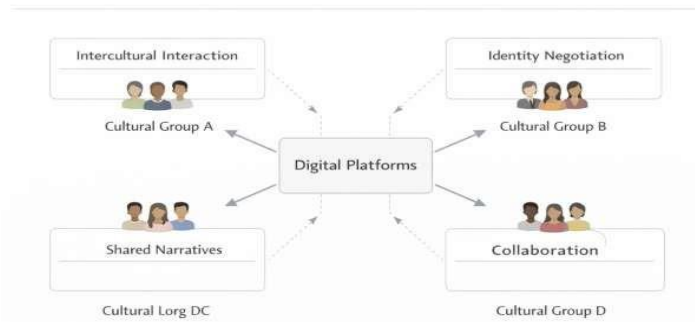


Figure 4. Cultural Exchange Process in Digital Youth Engagement

Figure 4 illustrating how intercultural interaction, identity negotiation, and shared narratives intersect within digital platforms to shape youth engagement and collaboration.

Theme 4: Social Change Outcomes and Perceived Impact

The reviewed studies suggest that youth engagement through digital media contributes to multiple forms of social change, including increased awareness, community mobilization, and policy advocacy. While direct causal impact was often difficult to measure, qualitative evidence indicates that digital initiatives enhance youth agency and foster collective identities oriented toward social transformation.

Notably, platforms such as TikTok and X (Twitter) were associated with rapid diffusion of social messages and agenda setting effects, whereas Facebook and Instagram supported sustained community engagement. These findings underscore the complementary roles of different platforms in achieving diverse social change outcomes.



Figure 5. Pathways From Digital Youth Engagement to Social Change

Figure 5 representation showing how youth engagement via digital platforms leads to awareness building, collective action, and broader social impact through managerial coordination and cultural exchange.

In general, the results demonstrate that international youth engagement in social change through digital media is a multifaceted process shaped by platform affordances, managerial practices, and intercultural dynamics. The thematic patterns identified across the 60 studies provide a coherent understanding of how digital media enable youth-led initiatives while simultaneously presenting organizational and cultural challenges. These findings form the basis for the discussion of theoretical and practical implications in the following section.

Analysis and Discussion

Interpreting Youth Engagement in Digital Social Change

The findings of this systematic qualitative review reinforce the view that international youth engagement in social change through digital media represents a distinct and evolving form of collective action. Consistent with the results, youth engagement emerges not merely as episodic participation but as an ongoing process shaped by interaction, collaboration, and identity construction

within digital environments. This aligns with earlier empirical observations that digital platforms enable youth to move beyond traditional modes of civic participation toward more fluid and network-based forms of engagement (31)(32).

The prominence of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and YouTube reflects differentiated engagement strategies rather than uniform usage patterns. The results suggest that youth strategically select platforms based on communicative affordances, audience reach, and content format, supporting previous research emphasizing platform-specific dynamics in digital engagement (33)(34). This nuanced use of platforms highlights youth agency in navigating digital ecosystems to maximize social visibility and impact.

Managerial Implications of Youth Led Digital Initiatives

From a management perspective, the results underscore that youth-led digital initiatives operate through informal yet structured organizational practices. Distributed leadership, flexible coordination, and strategic content management were recurrent across the reviewed studies, confirming that managerial processes are embedded within digital engagement even in the absence of formal organizational hierarchies (35)(36). These findings extend management scholarship by illustrating how leadership and coordination emerge organically within digitally mediated youth networks.

The reliance on digital tools for coordination and decision making suggests that youth develop managerial competencies through participation itself. Skills such as strategic planning, stakeholder communication, and performance monitoring were often acquired experientially, reinforcing arguments that digital engagement functions as a learning space for managerial and organizational development (37). However, challenges related to sustainability and volunteer fatigue indicate that informal management structures may struggle to maintain long-term momentum without institutional support (38).

Cultural Exchange as a Structuring Dimension of Engagement

The review highlights cultural exchange as a central but often under theorized dimension of international youth engagement in digital social change. The findings demonstrate that digital platforms act as intercultural spaces where youth negotiate meanings, values, and collective identities across cultural boundaries. This supports previous studies emphasizing the role of digital media in facilitating transnational dialogue and intercultural interaction among youth (39)(40).

At the same time, the results reveal that cultural diversity introduces managerial and communicative challenges. Language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and unequal visibility of voices were shown to influence participation dynamics and collaboration outcomes (41). These findings resonate with intercultural management literature, which stresses the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive leadership in diverse organizational settings. In digital youth initiatives, such competencies appear crucial for sustaining inclusive engagement and avoiding the marginalization of certain cultural perspectives.

Theoretical Contributions

By integrating youth engagement theory, social movement theory, and cross-cultural management perspectives, this study offers a multidimensional understanding of digital youth engagement in social change. The results support youth empowerment theory by demonstrating how digital platforms enhance agency, voice, and leadership opportunities for international youth (42).

Simultaneously, the findings align with digital extensions of social movement theory, particularly in illustrating how loosely organized networks can mobilize collective action through shared narratives and online visibility (43).

Importantly, this study contributes to cross-cultural management theory by situating cultural exchange within digitally mediated youth initiatives. Rather than treating culture as a background variable, the findings position cultural interaction as an active process shaping managerial practices, collaboration, and social outcomes. This theoretical integration addresses a gap in existing literature, where management and cultural exchange have often been examined separately in studies of youth engagement (44).

Practical Implications

The findings have several practical implications for stakeholders involved in supporting youth engagement and social change. For educational institutions, particularly universities hosting international students, the results highlight the importance of recognizing digital engagement as a legitimate form of experiential learning and leadership development. Institutions may consider integrating digital social change initiatives into curricula or co-curricular programs to enhance students' managerial and intercultural competencies (45).

For organizations and policymakers, the findings suggest that supporting youth-led digital initiatives requires more than providing technological access. Capacity building efforts should focus on enhancing managerial skills, intercultural communication, and long-term sustainability strategies. Providing mentorship, institutional recognition, and flexible funding mechanisms may help address challenges related to coordination and continuity identified in the reviewed studies (46)(47).

Implications for Future Research

This study also points to several directions for future research. While the reviewed literature provides rich qualitative insights, there remains a need for longitudinal studies that examine how youth engagement and managerial practices evolve over time within digital initiatives. Additionally, comparative research across cultural and regional contexts could further illuminate how cultural exchange shapes digital engagement strategies and outcomes.

Future studies may also explore the role of emerging platforms and technologies, such as algorithm-driven content distribution and artificial intelligence, in shaping youth engagement and social change. Examining these developments from a management and cultural exchange perspective would extend the theoretical and practical contributions of this field.

In summary, the discussion demonstrates that international youth engagement in social change through digital media is a complex, dynamic, and culturally embedded process. The integration of managerial practices and cultural exchange within digital platforms enables youth to mobilize social change while simultaneously presenting organizational and intercultural challenges. By synthesizing qualitative evidence across 60 studies, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of digital youth engagement and provides actionable insights for theory, practice, and future scholarship.

D. Conclusion

This study examined international youth engagement in social change through digital media by synthesizing qualitative evidence from 60 peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Using a systematic qualitative review approach guided by PRISMA, the research explored how digital platforms shape youth participation from management and cultural exchange perspectives.

The findings indicate that digital media platforms play a central role in enabling international youth to engage in social change beyond geographical and institutional boundaries. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), and YouTube facilitate diverse forms of engagement, ranging from community building and advocacy to collective mobilization. These platforms not only support participation but also influence how youth organize, communicate, and sustain social initiatives.

From a management perspective, youth-led digital initiatives are characterized by distributed leadership and informal coordination practices. Engagement in digital social change contributes to the development of managerial competencies, while simultaneously presenting challenges related to sustainability and coordination. Cultural exchange further shapes these initiatives, as digital platforms function as spaces for intercultural interaction, negotiation, and shared meaning-making among international youth.

By integrating youth empowerment, social movement, and cross-cultural management perspectives, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of digital youth engagement in social change. The findings offer practical insights for educators, organizations, and policymakers seeking to support youth-led initiatives, while also highlighting directions for future research on digitally mediated youth engagement in diverse cultural contexts.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Tasya Aspiranti, Head of the Doctor of Management Study Program at Universitas Islam Bandung (UNISBA), for her valuable academic guidance, constructive feedback, and continuous support throughout the development of this study. Her expertise and encouragement greatly contributed to strengthening the conceptual and methodological quality of the research. The author also acknowledges the academic environment provided by UNISBA, which supported the completion of this work.

References

1. Jones L, Halstead F, Parsons K, Le H, Bui LTH, Hackney C, et al. 2020-Vision: Understanding climate (in)action through the emotional lens of loss. *J Br Acad*. doi:10.5871/JBA/009S5.029
2. Supa M, Neag A, Kligler-Vilenchik N. "If I weren't an activist, I'd buy an old Nokia and I'd be OK": Youth wellbeing, digital media, and activism. *First Monday*. 2024;29(12). doi:10.5210/fm.v29i12.13854
3. D'Ambrosi L, Massoli L. Bridging and bonding connections beyond the web: youth movements and civic engagement. *Int Rev Sociol*. 2012;22(3):433-57. doi:10.1080/03906701.2012.730841
4. Kurubacak G. Reflections on the Digital Youth Leadership for Social Justice Activism: Understanding Silent Dialogues through Critical Pedagogy. *J Sch Educ Technol*. 2006;2(2):49-64. doi:10.26634/JSCH.2.2.860
5. Martinez-Sainz G, Hanna A. Youth digital activism, social media and human rights education: the Fridays for Future movement. *Hum Rights Educ Rev*. 2023;6(1):29-50. doi:10.7577/hrer.4958
6. Stuart J, Mitchell C. Media, Participation, and Social Change: Working within a "Youth as Knowledge Producers" Framework. In: *The Routledge International Handbook of Children, Adolescents and Media*. New York: Routledge; 2013. p. 362-70. doi:10.4324/9780203366981.CH44
7. Vromen A, Xenos MA, Loader BD. Young people, social media and connective action: from organisational maintenance to everyday political talk. *J Youth Stud*. 2015;18(1):80-100. doi:10.1080/13676261.2014.933198
8. Lee A. "climate justice is racial justice": the youth climate movement and intersectional media organizing in an algorithmic society. *Proc Annu Hawaii Int Conf Syst Sci*. 2021. doi:10.5210/SPR.V2021I0.11968
9. Zheltuhina MR, Zaitseva AE. Features of intercultural communication of youth in the electronic environment [Osobennosti mezhekul'turnoi kommunikatsii molodezhi v elektronnoi srede]. *Izv Balt State Acad Fish Fleet*. 2022;2(60):162-5. doi:10.46845/2071-5331-2022-2-60-162-165
10. Latimer C, Kendrick JR. How Young People Are Using Communication Technologies as Platforms and Pathways to Engagement: What the Research Tells Us. In: *Social Computing: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global; 2010. p. 403-24. doi:10.4018/978-1-61350-083-5.CH021
11. Tiidenberg K, Karatzogianni A, Parsanoglou D, Matthews J, Lepik KS, Raig M, et al. Social Media as a Shaper, Enabler, and Hurdle in Youth Political Participation. In: *Youth Visions of Europe*. Cham: Springer; 2024. p. 277-306. doi:10.1007/978-3-031-46929-9_12
12. Wang Q, Li H. Digital Bridge: The Role and Function of Youth Social Organizations in the Construction of Digital Villages. *Front Bus Econ Manag*. 2025;15(2):89-94. doi:10.54097/4mt75p68
13. Harris A, Johns A. Youth, social cohesion and digital life: From risk and resilience to a global digital citizenship approach. *J Sociol*. 2020;56(2):343-58. doi:10.1177/1440783320919173
14. Kaur H. Youth Political Mobilization in the Global South: Comparative Study of Online vs Offline Movements. *Int J Multidiscip Res*. 2025;7(4). doi:10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i04.54648
15. Reinikainen H, Kari JT, Luoma-aho V. Generation Z and Organizational Listening on Social Media. *Media Commun*. 2020;8(2):185-96. doi:10.17645/MAC.V8I2.2772
16. Padilla-Castillo G, Rodríguez-Hernández J. International Youth Movements for Climate Change: The #FridaysForFuture Case on Twitter. *Sustainability*. 2023;15(1):268. doi:10.3390/su15010268
17. Vanner C, Meena M, Alexander VS. Virtual Digital Storytelling: Building Solidarity in Transnational Participatory Research. *Int J Qual Methods*. 2025;24. doi:10.1177/16094069251352061

18. Saud MS, Ida R, Mashud M, Yousaf F, Ashfaq A. Cultural dynamics of digital space: Democracy, civic engagement and youth participation in virtual spheres. *Int J Intercult Relat.* 2024;98:101904. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101904
19. Sampaio IV, Robinson L, Moles K, Pangrazio L. Introduction to Youth, digital media, and civic engagement. *First Monday.* 2024;29(12). doi:10.5210/fm.v29i12.13839
20. Irannejad Bisafar F, Martinez LI, Parker AG. Social Computing-Driven Activism in Youth Empowerment Organizations: Challenges and Opportunities. In: *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* New York: ACM; 2018. p. 1-12. doi:10.1145/3173574.3173757
21. New Directions for Citizenship, Democracy, and Education. In: *Comparative and International Education.* New York: Routledge; 2021. doi:10.4324/9781003197881-16
22. Pathak-Shelat M, Bhatia KV. Young people as global citizens: negotiation of youth civic participation in adult-managed online spaces. *J Youth Stud.* 2019;22(1):15-33. doi:10.1080/13676261.2018.1483074
23. Wang Q, Li H. Youth Social Organizations' Participation in Digital Village Construction: Evolution, Characteristics, and Advancement Pathways. *Int J Educ Humanit.* 2025;15(3):112-7. doi:10.54097/0b9cp986
24. Wilf S, Castro EM, Gupta KG, Wray-Lake L. Shifting Culture and Minds: Immigrant- Origin Youth Building Critical Consciousness on Social Media. *Youth Soc.* 2023;55(6):1139-64. doi:10.1177/0044118x221103890
25. Chaves-Barboza E, Trujillo-Torres JM, López-Núñez JA. Accomplishments in Learning Self-Regulation in Personal Environments. *Creat Educ.* 2015;6(11):1072-83. doi:10.1016/B978-012109890-2/50031-7
26. Literat I, Kligler-Vilenchik N, Brough M, Blum-Ross A. Analyzing youth digital participation: Aims, actors, contexts and intensities. *Inf Soc.* 2018;34(4):261-73. doi:10.1080/01972243.2018.1463333
27. Bennett WL, Segerberg A. The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2013
28. Castells M. Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press; 2015.
29. Hofstede G, Hofstede GJ, Minkov M. Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind. 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill; 2017.
30. Stahl GK, Tung RL. Towards a more balanced treatment of culture in international business studies. *J Int Bus Stud.* 2015;46(4):391-414. doi:10.1057/jibs.2014.68
31. Corriero J, O'Doherty L. Digital expressions and networks shape intercultural opportunities for youth. *Intercult Educ.* 2013;24(5):491-505. doi:10.1080/14675986.2013.843241
32. Ihsaniyati H, Sarwoprasodjo S, Muljono P, Gandasari D. The use of social media for development communication and social change: a review. *Sustainability.* 2023;15(3):2283. doi:10.3390/su15032283
33. Rezaei M, Owens PE. Young Humans Make Change, Young Users Click: Creating Youth-Centered Networked Social Movements. *arXiv preprint.* 2023. doi:10.48550/arXiv.2303.07541
34. Chiew S, Mayes E, Maiava N, Villafañá D, Abhayawickrama N. Funny climate activism? A collaborative storied analysis of young climate advocates' digital activism. *Glob Stud Child.* 2024. doi:10.1177/20436106241241338
35. Vanner C, Meena M, Alexander VS. Virtual Digital Storytelling: Building Solidarity in Transnational Participatory Research. *Int J Qual Methods.* 2025;24. doi:10.1177/16094069251352061
36. Wang Q, Li H. Digital Bridge: The Role and Function of Youth Social Organizations in the Construction of Digital Villages. *Front Bus Econ Manag.* 2025;15(2):89-94. doi:10.54097/4mt75p68
37. Boulianne S, Lalancette M, Ilkiw D. "School Strike 4 Climate": Social Media and the International Youth Protest on Climate Change. *Media Commun.* 2020;8(2):208-18. doi:10.17645/MAC.V8I2.2768

38. Couldry N, Rodríguez C, Bolin G, Cohen JE, Goggin G, Kraidy MM, et al. Media and Communications. In: *The Cambridge Companion to Communication and Social Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2019. p. 69-89. doi:10.1017/9781108399647.006
39. D'Ambrosi L, Massoli L. Bridging and bonding connections beyond the web: youth movements and civic engagement. *Int Rev Sociol*. 2012;22(3):433-57. doi:10.1080/03906701.2012.730841
40. Harris A, Johns A. Youth, social cohesion and digital life: From risk and resilience to a global digital citizenship approach. *J Sociol*. 2020;56(2):343-58. doi:10.1177/1440783320919173
41. Literat I, Kligler-Vilenchik N, Brough M, Blum-Ross A. Analyzing youth digital participation: Aims, actors, contexts and intensities. *Inf Soc*. 2018;34(4):261-73. doi:10.1080/01972243.2018.1463333
42. Kurubacak G. Reflections on the Digital Youth Leadership for Social Justice Activism: Understanding Silent Dialogues through Critical Pedagogy. *J Sch Educ Technol*. 2006;2(2):49-64. doi:10.26634/JSCH.2.2.860
43. Zheltuhina MR, Zaitseva AE. Features of intercultural communication of youth in the electronic environment [Osobennosti mezhkul'turnoi kommunikatsii molodezhi v elektronnoi srede]. *Izv Balt State Acad Fish Fleet*. 2022;2(60):162-5. doi:10.46845/2071-5331-2022-2-60-162-165
44. Padilla-Castillo G, Rodríguez-Hernández J. International Youth Movements for Climate Change: The #FridaysForFuture Case on Twitter. *Sustainability*. 2023;15(1):268. doi:10.3390/su15010268
45. New Directions for Citizenship, Democracy, and Education. In: *Comparative and International Education*. New York: Routledge; 2021. doi:10.4324/9781003197881-16
46. Wilf S, Castro EM, Gupta KG, Wray-Lake L. Shifting Culture and Minds: Immigrant- Origin Youth Building Critical Consciousness on Social Media. *Youth Soc*. 2023;55(6):1139-64. doi:10.1177/0044118x221103890
47. Padilla Castillo G, Rodríguez-Hernández J. International Youth Movements for Climate Change: The #FridaysForFuture Case on Twitter. *Sustainability*. 2023;15(1):268. doi:10.3390/su15010268