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## **Cyber-Acculturative Factors Influencing Cybercultural Production and Consumption: A Cultural Economic Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** Continuous media exposure to different cultures can influence individuals' lifestyles, aspirations, needs, consumption patterns, and the production of commodities. As a result of globalization, cultural leveling has raised concerns on the potential diminishment or vanishment of local cultures and businesses. This can have significant impacts on local production, consumption patterns, and ultimately, local and national economies. Hence, this research explored the cyber-acculturative factors influencing cybercultural production and consumption.

**Design/methodology/approach:** We employed a basic qualitative research approach, utilizing Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis for data analysis. Inductive analysis was used to code data and address research questions. Data was collected through two online questionnaires, conducted as interviews with 50 participants: 18 media experts and 32 Instagram users, recruited via expert and convenience snowball sampling techniques.

**Findings:** Four perceived cyber-acculturative factors affecting media consumption and production, and their sub-themes, emerged: Personal Factors, Platform Design Factors, and Socio-Politico-Economic Factors, as well as Influential Groups and Content.

**Originality/value:** This research contributes to the existing literature on economy, especially the (cyber)cultural economy, by introducing the concept of cyber-acculturation and its impact on cultural production and consumption. Additionally, the developed qualitative model can guide governments and businesses in understanding how cyber-acculturation impacts social media users' content production and consumption, and subsequently, how these changes can shape real market production and consumption trends, and the overall economic landscape.

### **Keyword:**

Leadership Competence  
Government Organizations  
World-Class  
Theme Analysis

**Keywords:** Cybercultural Production and Consumption, Cyber-Acculturation, Social Media, Cultural Economy

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## 1. Introduction

Cultural economy encompasses sectors that integrate creativity into their production process and generate intellectual property as outputs (Boğa & Topcu, 2020). It refers to the socio-cultural dimensions of economic activity or production (i.e., design or marketing), and also a particular subsection of economic activity related to cultural products and activities, themselves (Pratt, 2007). Cultural industry, also known as the creative industry, encompasses diverse fields involved in the production and distribution of cultural and creative content (Mulyana et al., 2023). Since the 1980s, cultural products and services have been produced and distributed aligned with industry standards. Cultural industry is established as a market-oriented production and consumption industry that is inseparable from science and technology. (Mu et al., 2021). Digital platforms have changed the global businesses by decreasing the cost of international interactions and transactions, and providing effective ways to reach a large number of potential customers (Schilirò, 2020).

Digital globalization, defined by data and information flows, represents a new form of globalization. Globalization signifies the growing interdependence of the global economies, cultures, and populations, driven by the cross-border trade of goods, services, and technologies, and flows of investment, information, and people (Schilirò, 2020). It reduces the nation-states' sovereignty by causing cultural leveling (i.e., homogenization) (Ayaz, 2021), a (two-way) process in which makes unique and distinct cultures increasingly similar to each other, especially due to the Western cultural diffusion into other cultures (Henslin, 2013; Ferris & Stein, 2018). By creating indistinctive national boundaries and restructuring the market, cultural leveling has led to a global era that prioritizes gaining more market share and social wealth in creating an information society (Genc & Öksüz, 2015).

Following the agricultural and industrial economies, the digital economy has emerged as the next stage after the information economy, Internet economy, and new economy. It has been profoundly changing production methods, lifestyles, governance, and the international economic landscape, demonstrating a country's comprehensive strength and competitiveness in the digital age (Xia et al., 2023).

Data and information, the “new oil,” have become basic resources, and their global flow has created opportunities to data monetization (Schilirò, 2020). The cyber economy forms optimal ties and interactions between economic subjects and objects throughout production, exchange, and distribution (Nesterov, 2019), which contributes to promoting fairness, efficiency, and economic growth (Xia et al., 2023).

Social media use also contributes to economic growth through cost reduction, effective feedback systems, and branding strategies (Song et al., 2023). It turns some consumers into online opinion leaders and Internet celebrities who share more in common with ordinary consumers than traditional celebrities, making them more influential in promoting online sales (Chen et al., 2021). The business of celebrity marketing has become flourished, with some celebrities creating economic value for an endorsed brand (Teng et al., 2020). The name, image, lifestyle, and opinions of a celebrity, as an idealized popular media construction, carry cultural and economic worth (M. Xu et al., 2021). Likewise, micro-celebrities, whose identities are shaped by their followers' recognition, admiration, association, and aspiration, become profitable marketing strategies (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019). Celebrity culture and industry are intertwined with media culture and cultural production, circulation and consumption (J. Xu et al., 2021).

Cyberculture is a contemporary culture and a sociocultural form arising from the exchange between society, culture and the new microelectronic-based technologies, and represents a set of techniques, practices, attitudes, values, and ways of thinking determined by cyberspace (Cardoso, 2021). As an indispensable part of everyday culture, social media shapes norms and rules, affecting people's lifestyles (Ying, 2020). This acts as an identity-building and distinguishing activity, manifesting their behaviors, interests, and the ways of living and thinking (Firdaus & Pusposari, 2022). Changes in original cultural patterns stem from the intersection of and continuous firsthand contact with different cultures, in a process known as acculturation (Berry & Sam, 2006; Wen, 2020). Berry's acculturation model illuminates the orientations of immigrants towards the new society, which encompasses integration (holding on to one's culture while valuing contact with the majority group), assimilation (valuing interaction with the majority group but not preserving one's own culture and identity), separation (preserving one's own culture while rejecting interaction with the majority group), and marginalization (abandoning one's culture and rejecting interaction with the majority group). In this model, integration is considered the most adaptive strategy, contributing to personal growth and understanding between social groups (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022). Acculturation agents in both heritage and host cultures, such as social networks, media, family, friends, social and religious institutions are integral parts of the consumer acculturation process (Kizgin et al., 2020).

Social media has facilitated intercultural contact "and expanded a 'new social neighborhood' for cultural transmission and acculturation" (Li et al., 2019). Digital acculturation results in three major outcomes: digital integration, digital separation, and digital deprivation. Digital

integration embodies an acculturation process, where, through dynamic interactions with online and offline worlds, individuals and communities adopt cultural attributes from different cultural groups, without completely discarding their own. Furthermore, digital consumer culture empowers consumers and fosters the identity fluidity and freedom to interact with and experience different communities (Dey et al., 2020).

Acculturation, as a process of encountering and adjusting to a new cultural environment, involves changes in attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions (Li et al., 2019). Continuous media exposure to different cultures can also influence individuals' lifestyles, aspirations, needs, consumption patterns, and even the production of commodities. These media-driven influences always go beyond a mere media consumption impact, and have significant effects on various aspects of social life, including the economy. As a result of globalization, cultural leveling especially more leaned toward a Westernized culture, has raised concerns on the potential diminishment or vanishment of local cultures and businesses. This can have significant impacts on local production, consumption patterns, and ultimately, local and national economies. Hence, this research explored the cyber-acculturative factors influencing cybercultural production and consumption.

#### Research Methods

This research employed a basic qualitative research approach (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015), utilizing Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2022) for data analysis. To answer research questions, inductive (bottom-up) analysis (Dawadi, 2021) was utilized for data coding involving the following phases: data reduction, data grouping and concept formation (Kynge et al., 2020). Initially, in vivo coding, which emphasizes the actual spoken words of participants (Manning,

2017), was employed using NVivo 10 software.

Two online questionnaires were created using Google Forms and distributed WhatsApp and Telegram messaging apps. The experts' questionnaire included 4 closed-ended demographic questions and 7 open-ended questions. Two of the open-ended questions, which explored social media governance dilemmas, were excluded from analysis in this article. Similarly, the users' questionnaire included 5 closed-ended demographic questions, 7 multi-choice questions on media use patterns (excluded from this article's analysis), and 5 open-ended questions.

In both questionnaires, one question explored the factors influencing users to follow Instagram content different from their culture. Two questions explored the factors causing users to adopt or not adopt cultural elements, lifestyles, or thoughts and behaviors observed on Instagram that differ from their own. Two questions investigated which groups of people and content on Instagram public pages have the greatest impact on users' thoughts, behaviors, and

lives, and explored the reasons behind this influence as well as the characteristics of these impactful groups and content.

Data was collected through interviews with 50 participants: 18 media experts and 32 Instagram users. To recruit both expert and user participants, we used two sampling techniques: expert sampling (a purposive, non-probability technique relying on the researcher's judgment to select individuals based on analytical, logical, or theoretical criteria; Berndt (2020)), and convenience snowball sampling (which involves selecting potential participants who can provide important data; Fikes (2023)). Saturation is the most common principle for judging the adequacy of purposive samples in qualitative research (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). In our study, we reached saturation after 10 interviews with experts and 25 interviews with users. A systematic review showed that most datasets with a relatively homogenous study population reached saturation within 25 interviews, typically between 9 and 17 interviews, with a mean of 12-13 interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of 50 Participants**

<i>Experts</i>		<i>Users</i>			
Sample Size	18 Experts	32 Instagram Users			
Gender	72.2% Male 27.8% Female	46.9% Male 53.1% Female			
Work Experience (Years)	5-35 (Mean= 21.4)	Age Range (Years)	13-17	6.3%	
Work Experience Fields	Media Production		83.3%	18-24	6.3%
	Media Management		50%	25-34	28.1%
	Media Expertism		44.4%	35-44	21.9%
	University Teaching		33.3%	45-54	25%
				55-64	6.3%
			65+	6.3%	
Education	Doctorate and Higher	38.9%	21.9%		
	Master's Degree	50%	18.8%		
	Bachelor's Degree	11.1%	31.3%		

	Associate's Degree	–	3.1%
	High School Diploma	–	12.5%
	Under High School	–	12.5%
	Instagram Use (Years)	Over 10	3.1%
		5-10	59.4%
		1-4	31.3%
		Less than 1	6.3%

To ensure trustworthiness, we adopted four criteria from Eryilmaz (2022) along with their corresponding strategies: credibility (peer debriefing), transferability (thick description, purposeful sampling), dependability and confirmability (audit trail, external audit). We opted not to use stepwise replication (Eryilmaz, 2022) (through calculating intercoder reliability), because Braun and Clarke argued that quantitative measures of intercoder reliability are epistemologically problematic for judging qualitative work (Cofie et al., 2022).

## 2. Results and Discussion

The perceived cyber-acculturative factors affecting media consumption and production were categorized into personal, platform design, and socio-politico-economic factors, as well as influential groups and content.

### • Personal factors

Three main themes emerged from categorizing personal factors: Desires and Needs; Content Consumption; and Demographic Characteristics.

**Table 2: Personal factors**

Theme	Sub-Theme	Category	Example (Translated from Persian)
<b>Desires and Needs</b>	a) Identification	Similarity	"Because I like them and want to live like them".
		Homophily	"A kind of taking refuge or identifying with a different culture". "Users follow their pages to learn more about these people and their daily lifestyle and try to identify with them."
	b) Self-Actualization	Desires and Wants	"Posts that show the audience's wants and dreams more".
		Personal Development	"[...] any content, analysis or behavior that helps me think better, make the right decisions and live a better life and can help me progress in any field".
		Willingness to Change	"To create change".
	c) Enjoyment and Entertainment	–	"For entertainment and enjoyment".
	d) The Need to Know	Awareness Raising	"Interest in learning about different cultures"
		Curiosity and New Experiences	"Curiosity"; "Curiosity and experiencing new things"
		Education	"The need for education and improving the level of general information".
	e) Social Needs	Social Class Belongness	"Belonging to a higher, superior, stronger or wealthier social class or pretending to belong to that particular class (changing social class even if it is superficial)".
		Social Welfare	"When these contents fulfill the needs of their lives".
		Liberation	"Expressing freedom from constraints makes them use the observed behaviors". "Escaping/ migrating from one's culture to a different culture".
		Communicative Needs	"Attention seeking".

		Feeling Better About Oneself	“Feeling better about oneself (self-confidence)”
	f) Psychological Needs	The Desire to be Different	“The desire to show off and express being different or intellectual”.
		Variety-Seeking	“Specific personality and psychological characteristics such as [...] variety-seeking”.
		Subjective Well-Being	“Subjective well-being- life satisfaction”.
<b>Content Consumption</b>	a) Being a Content Producer/ Consumer	–	“I mostly promote my own thoughts rather than being influenced”.
	b) Incidental Exposure	–	“Coincidentally, only in the explorer”.
	c) Media Usage	–	“Frequent use of media/ social media (constant exposure)”.
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>	a) Age	–	“[...] my age and doctoral education also have an influence. I think, as people's personalities and attitudes take shape, they tend to become more conservative with age and are less likely to adopt different, bold, or perhaps unconventional lifestyles, especially due to social pressures”.
	b) Social Status	–	“Users have different tendencies depending on media literacy, social and family status, and also age characteristics”.
	c) Economic Status	–	“Belonging to the less privileged classes of society (economic pressures)”.
	d) Gender	–	“These people differ according to gender, age group and many other factors”.

### ➤ Desires and Needs

Desires and Needs drive media use. Individuals seek content that fulfills their motivations, leading them to specific platforms offering experiences that cater to those needs. Content on different social media platforms must differ to reflect users' different motivations, gratifications and purposes (Borges, 2023).

a) Identification: Social media platforms are recognized as platforms for formation, management, and negotiation of identities. Users align themselves with content that reflects or reinforces their desired image, while avoiding content that contradicts it (Yau et al., 2020). Furthermore, the principle of homophily in social networks works as a mechanism for generating and strengthening ties over time, where individuals connect with others who share similar sociodemographics. These platforms can foster a sense of closeness with weak social ties for heavy users, and also a form of “homophily-by-choice” based on information-sharing similarities, particularly in areas like political news and entertainment (Meraji Oskuie & Meraji Oskouie, 2024).

b) Self-Actualization: The concept of self-actualization holds significant weight in modern psychology. In the 1970s, Maslow described self-actualized people as those who genuinely fulfill their talents and capacities through a process of achieving fulfillment (Ortiz, 2020). Individuals achieve self-actualization when they have freedom and develop creativity and soft skills. These qualities can indirectly influence the economy (Numonjonovich, 2022).

c) Enjoyment and Entertainment: Media enjoyment, defined as happiness, pleasure and flow when using any medium, contributes to educational outcomes, motivation for physical activities, and stabilizing societal structures (Zolkepli et al., 2014). The emphasis on consumption and fun experiences has resulted in a diverse range of actors in marketplace focusing on satisfying the consumption demands of fun-seekers (Malik et al., 2023). Social media itself serves as a tool for gratifications such as entertainment, passing time (Yang & Ha, 2021), and escapism, a phenomenon where individuals facing persistent hardships detach from their reality and real-world problems into imaginary worlds (Siricharoen, 2019). Social media also satisfies users' needs for emotional release and

anxiety relief. Furthermore, content contribution itself can serve as a source of entertainment (Zolkepli et al., 2014).

d) The Need to Know: Social media's knowledge-sharing capabilities have changed how we live, work, learn and interact. Knowledge sharing encompasses the conveyance and acquisition of knowledge among individuals, groups or organizations. It provides information to help others, and to collaborate to develop new ideas, solve problems, or implement policies and procedures (Ahmed et al., 2019).

e) Social Needs: Individuals' social needs encompass the requirements to connect and interact with others, and maintain social connections in order to achieve personal satisfaction or complete tasks (Sarwar et al., 2023). In the context of interpersonal communication, interactivity reflects the extent to which communicators address each other's communication needs (Zhao, 2019). Social connections and task-technology fit influence a user's intention to use social media (Sarwar et al., 2023).

Moreover, some participants mentioned the concept of social class belongingness. Social class is a system of stratification based on economic and social (i.e., educational and occupational) statuses, highlighting shared values, interests, desires, and patterns of behavior and consumption (Müllerová, 2017).

f) Psychological Needs: Personality traits influence the development of psychological needs and how these needs are satisfied (Kozan et al., 2019). Motivation to use social networking sites is explained by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (using media that satisfy users' gratification needs) and Self-Determination Theory (three basic needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness drive social media use) (Wong & McLellan, 2024).

Some participants mentioned subjective well-being (SWB), a subjective, relative, and holistic measure of life quality that reflects mental health, and is linked to positive outcomes like self-esteem and tolerance (Bai et al., 2021). SWB is influenced by factors such as personality traits, attribution style, physical health, socioeconomic status, social support, personal values and income (Bai et al., 2021; Samsu et al., 2023). Additionally, Subjective Economic Well-being, an individual's perception and evaluation of their financial standing, can be influenced by technology use, particularly social media (Samsu et al., 2023).

### ➤ Content Consumption

Technological convergence and the distribution and accessibility of content across multiple platforms shaped new content consumption patterns, such as changes to volume, channel, device and time (Saulite, 2021). Shifting media consumption patterns and transcendence of geographical boundaries expose people to foreign cultures. This creates a conundrum for societies: how to maintain their traditional cultural identities while navigating the influx of new cultural elements introduced by global media (Sutrisno, 2023).

a) Being a Content Producer/ Consumer: Prosumer is a consumer who is involved in both the production and consumption of goods, services, or content within a market or industry, generating value through personal use, and influencing the markets. Prosumers influence consumer decision-making, and their active participation motivations include altruistic motives, (community building, knowledge sharing, and social influence) and self-interest motives (personal branding, indirect monetization, and networking opportunities). Unlike prosumers, influencers, with many social media followers, have formal relationships with brands. The transformation of some prosumers into influencers can result in consumer distrust (Malodia et al., 2024).

b) Incidental Exposure: Media exposure, the degree to which the audience has accessed certain media messages, encompasses two aspects: frequency and extensity (Liu et al., 2021). Users are daily exposed to a great amount of social media content, which largely depends on the interests and behaviors of their connections on social media (Sicilia et al., 2020). This process can lead to an incidental exposure (Barnidge & Xenos, 2024), that in contrast with intentional or selective exposure, occurs when users inadvertently encounter and stumble across content rather than actively searching for it (Vraga & Tully, 2021; Nanz et al., 2022). Social media exposure is driven by personal choices, friends' decisions on posting, and algorithms (Vraga & Tully, 2021).

c) Media Usage: Greater frequency and volume of social media use may represent the wealthier economic status of a region or country (Cui, 2021). Moreover, social media usage can influence purchase intent, brand loyalty (Chu et al., 2020), media multitasking (Su & Chen, 2020), and therefore, media exposure.

### ➤ Demographic Characteristics

Sociodemographic factors influence both online behaviors (Meraji Oskuie et al., 2023), and the acculturation process (De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021).

a) Age: Age groups may differ in their interests, purchasing abilities, online behaviors (Zhou, 2023), and preferred online communication channels (Bento et al., 2018). Age, also, inversely influences acculturation (De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021). Migration in early ages directly influences the stronger identification with the host culture (Cobb et al., 2021; De-Juan-Vigaray et al., 2021).  
b) Social Status, a fundamental human motive, is an individual's position in social hierarchy that reflects the amount of respect or admiration received from others (Dubois, 2020). Status seeking is the pursuit of power, privilege, and prestige (Delhey et al., 2022), and the ability to obtain a high social status is influenced by an individual's qualities, assets and network position

(Redhead & Power, 2022). Social Networking Sites (SNSs) grant greater control over accumulating digital status, allowing users to achieve higher social status within SNSs, even if their offline social environment wouldn't permit it (Meythaler et al., 2023).

c) Economic Status: People with higher economic status experience higher life satisfaction (Zhuk et al., 2023), and have greater access to social capital and stronger social integration (Zhou et al., 2021).  
d) Gender: Studies have shown gender differences in acculturation preferences (Estupinan-Mesa et al., 2024), customer satisfaction, purchase behaviors, and participation in social brand engagement activities (Akbarov, 2020).

### • Platform Design Factors

Social media platforms' design principles were mentioned by some participants as influencing content production and consumption:

**Table 3: Platform Design Factors**

Theme	Example (Translated from Persian)
Marketing	"It is more like an advertisement and a marketplace".
Attractiveness	"Mostly, the appealing nature".
Entertainment	"Entertainment".
Fad	"[...] while Insta is more personal and fashion-oriented".
User-Friendliness	"Instagram's ease of use and reach".
Personal Nature	"[...] the power of choice and the personal nature of the space are effective factors in leading the audience towards people (celebrities) and differing cultural spaces".
Autonomy of Use	

### ➤ Marketing

Social media marketing involves using social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings valuable for an organization's stakeholders (Cartwright et al., 2021). Social media platforms have altered the marketing landscape, by allowing user-generated content, and turning consumers from passive recipients of messages into active sharers of insights (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). Also, surveillance capitalism, a new economic order, employs human experience as free raw material used for hidden commercial practices of extraction, prediction, and sales (Sahebi & Formosa, 2022).

### ➤ Attractiveness

Source attractiveness (Likeableness), in addition to source credibility and expertise, is considered one of the key factors in persuasion. Source attractiveness means how similar, familiar,

likeable and pleasant the source is (Meraji Oskouie et al., 2023).

### ➤ Entertainment

Fueled by the Internet's global reach, the rapid expansion of major digital entertainment platforms has made content accessible to both local and global users (Basaran & Ventura, 2022). This satisfies the need for convenience in accessing entertainment, bypassing the time and location barriers. This is made possible by digital innovations and big data transfer technologies (Kuriakose & Nagasubramanian, 2024).

### ➤ Fad

Fads can be found in various, though limited, worlds of play and games. Like fashions, they come and go without any obvious reason and leave no permanent traces in the community. They can be modifications of older products. They hit their customers like a storm, conquering them almost overnight, and disappear as quickly as they appeared. Unlike fashions and more like



innovations, they find and establish new social and cultural practices (Shove et al., 2009).

#### ➤ User-Friendliness

The rapid growth in the number of Instagram users, and its popularity among the younger generations can be attributed to its user-friendly, creative, interactive, and free in-app visual tools (Rahman et al., 2022).

#### ➤ Personal Nature

The personal nature of social media use was a topic addressed by some participants. Social media personalize content based on a user's digital footprint and the specific population the user belongs to (Sahebi & Formosa, 2022). From a marketing perspective, social media technologies enable message customization and personalization, assisting consumers in searching for needed information and facilitating personalized dialogue between marketers and consumers (Cheung et al., 2021). Presenting consumers with choices that align with their tastes

contributes to a more engaging and user-friendly experience (Raji et al., 2024).

#### ➤ Autonomy of Use

Autonomy is “a matter of developing autonomy competencies, having authentic ends and control over key aspects of your own life, and not being manipulated, coerced, and controlled by others” (Sahebi & Formosa, 2022). Social media platforms grant users freedom over choosing accounts they want to follow, unfollow, or block, tailoring their social media feeds to their unique needs (Rosenthal & Tobin, 2023). Although some scholars argue that the autonomy of users can be harmed through the control that social media platforms have over their users' data, attention, and behavior (Sahebi & Formosa, 2022).

#### • Socio-Political-Economic Factors

The macro level factors were classified into the following themes:

**Table 4: Socio-Political-Economic Factors**

Theme	Sub-Theme	Example (Translated from Persian)
<b>Cultural Imperialism</b>	–	“The belonging of a differing culture to the dominant cultural, media stream, known as media imperialism, which employs proper methods of messaging, repetition and persuasion to export its culture to other countries”.
<b>Perceived Superiority</b>	a) Higher Social Class	“To Belong to a higher, superior, stronger, or richer social class”.
	b) Cultural Betterness	“If I recognize that it is with a better culture”.
	c) Global/ Socio-Political Power	“The political/social/international power of a culture different from your own”.
<b>Socio-Economic Gap Alleviation</b>	–	“These small borrowings from lifestyles different from ours may give us inner peace or alleviate the class gaps in the society and the large economic, cultural and social gaps with other cultures in developed countries”.
<b>Different Lifestyle</b>	a) Better Life	“A happy and peaceful lifestyle”. “[...] a different but effective lifestyle”.
	b) Luxurious Lifestyle	“luxury”.
	c) Modern Lifestyle	“Modern lifestyle”.

#### ➤ Cultural Imperialism

Cultural imperialism theories informed by a political economy approach described the cultural influence of US media in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia during the 1960s-1990s (Artz, 2023). Media products flow primarily from developed countries to less developed ones. Western countries, especially the United States, began to export media content to the rest of the world, to attain economic gains and exert cultural

imperialism (Ng & Taneja, 2023). Transnational cultural domination, or, in other words, transnational capitalist media influence, signifies a shift away from singular national control over cultural production in film, television, streaming services, and social media (Artz, 2023). With the growth in domestic media industries, people prefer content related to their region and in their own language. However, while media consumption is driven by cultural proximity, media globalization has enabled more cross-

cultural content consumption (Ng & Taneja, 2023).

#### ➤ Perceived Superiority

Perceived superiority was categorized into the following three sub-themes:

a) Higher Social Class: Social class is as an individual's resources in society, such as income and education, occupational prestige, and self-perceived social position in comparison to others, which is used for categorization. It can be changed over time, if allowed by the societal structure (Phillips et al., 2020). Social media serves as a platform for conspicuous consumption to display status and prestige. Individuals from lower social classes may imitate the luxury consumption of higher social classes, sharing such activities to foster a feeling of belonging to and adapting to a group. Conversely, individuals from higher classes may seek uniqueness and rarity, showcasing their privilege and exclusivity in their consumption and leisure activities (Efendioğlu, 2019).

b) Cultural Betterness: Classic acculturation research, reflecting an assimilationist perspective, viewed the new culture as an improvement to migrants' home cultures (Samuel, 2023). From a critical theory standpoint, acculturation can be seen as a process of exposure to a culture positioned as inherently superior due to its historical, global economic and political success. Hence, for most contemporary migrants, the host culture is not only new and different, but also an inherently "better" culture (Stephens, 2016). Unlike the offline world, where physical presence compels interactions, social media enables selective exposure to other cultural groups (Kizgin et al., 2020).

c) Global/ Socio-Political Power: Social power, characterized by unequal power dynamics between an individual and a group, is crucial for understanding how influencing others occurs. Social power can stem from the following sources: expert power, referent power, reward/coercive power, and legitimate power (P. Wang et al., 2021). The global economic landscape and international power have undergone profound transformations, driving a new wave of scientific and technological revolution and industrial change (Chunyan, 2024).

#### ➤ Socio-Economic Gap Alleviation

Early analyses were optimistic about new communication technologies, believing they could level the playing field for disadvantaged individuals by providing access to educational,

cultural, and economic resources (Nicolescu et al., 2022). Additionally, as mentioned earlier, social media conspicuous consumption can be used to display status and prestige, and foster a sense of belonging and adapting to a group (Efendioğlu, 2019).

#### ➤ Different Lifestyle

This theme was categorized into the three following sub-themes:

a) Better Life: Social media platforms are designed to provide users with better communication and an enjoyable online life. The rise of social media has changed human lifestyle (Bai & Gao, 2021). On the other hand, continuous acculturation leaves lasting effects on immigrants' perceived values, contribute to building a better life in the new environment (Foroudi et al., 2020).

b) Luxurious Lifestyle: Defining luxury is a challenge due to its subjective and relative nature. Luxury in a consumption setting is defined as rare, exclusive, prestigious, and authentic products and services that are high-quality, expensive, and non-essential, offering symbolic and emotional/hedonic value through customer experiences (Leban et al., 2021). Luxuriousness is embedded in small enjoyments that facilitate escapism. In the online realm, branding strategies often prioritize the promotion of a lifestyle, rather than selling products (Creevey et al., 2022).

c) Modern Lifestyle: The concept of lifestyle has become central to modern society. Specific to certain groups, it is a procedure for using goods, places, and times (Serinah & Setiawina, 2019). The creation of lifestyle is intertwined with the processes of modernization, which is related to technology, and individualization, that facilitates the diffusion and adoption of new technology (Ying, 2020). Modernity manifests in lifestyle, critical power, and the social media interactions, as characteristics of modern lifestyle (Serinah & Setiawina, 2019). Modern lifestyle grants freedom in life governance for some people, while excluding others. World modernization has increasingly focused on "fostering leisure in terms of health and physical activity as a lifestyle instrument for self-betterment" (Seong, 2022).

#### • Influential Groups and Content

Although the majority of users are mere content consumers, silent observers, or lurkers, some of them are active producers of user-generated content, known as prosumers, content creators, or influencers (Weber et al., 2021). Participants identified the following influential groups of

people and Instagram content that impact them most:

(Chu et al., 2020), and are the most important branding tool available to athletes (Doyle et al., 2022), and musicians who monetize the new forms of contact with audiences (Everts et al., 2022).

**Table 5: Influential Groups and Content**

➤ Educational-Informational	
Theme	Example (Translated from Persian)
<b>Leisure Time</b>	Participants mentioned educational groups and content as influential, such as lifestyle, scientific, historical places, sports, music, literary, moral, ethical, humane, and practical content.
<b>Educational-Informational</b>	“Content and messages that contain political, social, and technological content well” “Economic messages”. “Routine things that appear in content such as fast news in life. Like fashion and clothing, technological, political, social, economic and technological content from reliable sources and pages. People who greatly value their health”. “Psychology and getting to know how to behave with different people”. “Content that has mostly scientific and ethical aspects”. The literature information gathering and dissemination.
<b>Cultural</b>	“People who belong to the social class with high culture, elite culture. These people have a luxurious lifestyle, not too cumbersome customs, but at the same time they value human value for each and every person, have understanding and comprehension of the correct analysis of the events and happenings around them, do continuous study, people who help others, they often have a high level of knowledge in various fields, and it is important for them to keep up with new technologies. At the same time, they care about their appearance and thoughts”. These environments host influencer profiles who share didactic resources applicable in various pedagogical contexts (Gil-Quintana & Vida de Leon, 2021). Some educators also utilize social
<b>Market and Consumption</b>	“Creative groups in the field of media platforms to reach ‘large’ followers and implementing the desired lifestyle development, personal branding” order to monetize their influence (Carpenter et al., 2023).
<b>Reference Groups</b>	“The difference in a person's lifestyle makes users follow them” “Different sources and distances in a person's personal knowledge or skills (Holtz, et al., 2019). But depends internet and social media have increased the accessibility of diversified and superior social classes”. “More being appears”. “Political information, democratizing content [...]. producers and people who are also considered celebrities outside the world of Instagram, that is, they have influence in society”. “The second category of influencers are those who have gained fame and popularity through the Instagram platform. Celebrities, Micro celebrities”. “People who have special scientific, professional and moral legitimacy”. “Some political groups”. “Friends”. “Groups similar to the user, such as peer groups or groups with similar attitudes”. “Groups of potential buyers, and a reduction in cost of small businesses (Cui, 2021).”

➤ **Leisure Time**

Some participants mentioned contents related to entertainment, humor, tourism, sport, music and the like as influential. The concept of entertainment often evokes connotations of pleasure or emotion obtained from leisure activities (Basaran & Ventura, 2022). Internet's appeal stems from entertainment and informativeness (Borges, 2023). Instagram use is predicted by entertainment (Stollfuß, 2020). Some leading influencers use humor to build lasting emotional connections with their followers (Barry & Graça, 2018). Social media platforms have facilitated a global exchange of travel information

➤ **Cultural**

Participants mentioned the following influential cultural groups and content, including elite culture, dominant culture, national culture, Western countries exporting cultural products, and high and low cultures. Globalization has been changing societies in terms of cultural domination. This influence extends beyond national borders, to include the world community being controlled by a transnational power exerted through social media (Suryosumunar & Noorzeha, 2021). This social media itself is controlled by a few global platform giants that

dominate global attention flows and media consumption (Ng & Taneja, 2023).

Dominant social groups display cultural signs of superiority to signal their upper social position (Friedman & Reeves, 2020). In this context, social media platforms can cause a relative shift of power between elites and non-elites. Elites, a small group holding disproportionate power in society, leverage their social media presence to reinforce their relative position of power. However, the non-elite public has also gained increased possibilities on social media to influence their elite counterparts (Bordignon, 2022). Culture is often classified into high culture (including intellectual, critical, and artistic cultural products aimed at elites) and low culture (mass culture driven by commercialism) (Hidayah & Retpitasari, 2023). Traditionally separate, low and high culture are converging for mutually beneficial collaboration, such as in brands that serve as a new meeting ground, engendering hybridization between the two (Ozgen, 2019).

#### ➤ **Market and Consumption**

Participants identified marketing groups and content related to industries and businesses, as well as consumerism-focused groups and content related to lifestyle, luxury, fashion, clothing, and makeup. Consumption plays a central role in individual and societal life, fulfilling needs and shaping identity and culture. Current lifestyles and cultures reflect consumerism. The rise of social media platforms has accelerated the processes of consumption, with hyper-consumerist culture subtly permeating all aspects of daily life (Moravčíková, 2022). Globalization, technological advancements, and modern media contributed to changes in lifestyles by promoting consumerism, the emulation of media idols, and the creation of media and fashion addicts. These factors collectively contribute to shifts in consumer product consumption, attitudes, and overall behavior (Vuković et al., 2023).

The social media use significantly impacts the role of content creators within the creative industry, who leverage social media for both workspace and promotion (endorsement) (Astuti et al., 2023). For example, Instagram is a popular platform for brand influencers to promote content and sell products for businesses across various industries, including beauty, travel, food, beverage, and fashion (Hazari & Sethna, 2023). Fashion influencers leverage content creation and the concept of "glamour labor" to foster affective connections with their audience and promote brands and products (Arriagada, 2021), and digital

subcultural generations have growing influence on the luxury industry by sharing value evaluations of luxury brands across social media platforms (Han & Kim, 2020). Overall, social media platforms have a powerful influence on younger generations' consumption patterns and have the potential to drive social change (Vladimirova et al., 2023).

#### ➤ **Reference Groups**

Participants mentioned influential online reference groups, including celebrities and micro-celebrities, socio-political activists (such as moral/ethical, political, socially active groups), knowledgeable individuals (such as elites, experts, socio-political analysts, politicians and political figures), groups similar to users (such as friends, relatives, and peers), groups different from users (in terms of lifestyle, personality, and behavior), socio-politico-economically superior individuals, attractive individuals, successful and healthier people with better lifestyles, norm-breakers, and even those with more superficial knowledge and literacy.

A reference group, comprising those who directly or indirectly and significantly influence an individual's behaviors, attitudes, norms, values, aspirations, or product opinions, includes close contacts from an individual's social network and actual or imaginary inspirational figures (Chung et al., 2013; Aluvala & Varkala, 2020; Pereira & Gomes, 2020; Goldberg & Kotze, 2022). Homophily, as a selection process based on social similarities such as sociodemographic characteristics and cultural preferences, influences network formation and relational choice within personal networks (Figeac & Favre, 2023). Conversely, heterophily describes the tendency of an individual within a group to maintain a higher proportion of relations with members of other groups (Barranco et al., 2019). Unlike heterophily, homophily—surrounding oneself by like-minded individuals—can potentially create “echo chambers” and “filter bubbles” on social media that limit the types of people and information an individual is exposed to (Turel, 2023).

Users with high social status often play opinion leadership roles (W. Wang et al., 2021). In political context, social media platforms are reconfiguring the relationships and dynamics between political actors, media outlets, and the public (Casero-Ripollés, 2021). Social media influencers are a new significant force in shaping public discourse and awareness of socio-political issues (Li & Feng, 2022). Social media elites,

including celebrities, politicians, journalists, thought leaders, and influencers, are highly influential and popular users with considerable reach who significantly impact conversations, trends, and narratives on social media (De Nicola et al., 2023). Social media user engagement includes political consumerism, where users leverage the platform to support or boycott causes they care about, although, there are generational gaps in political media use and civic engagement among users (Kharel, 2024).

In economic context, contemporary businesses actively engage in generating and disseminating positive word-of-mouth communications by encouraging favorable statements from existing

customers, family members, friends, peers, influential opinion leaders, and celebrities (Etim et al., 2023). Consumers exhibit greater trust in brands when endorsed by credible and knowledgeable influencers (Marimuthu et al., 2023). An influencer's physical attractiveness also can generate more positive attitudes towards endorsed products (Baran & Porto, 2023). In contrast to traditional celebrities, social media celebrities are characterized by the performance of ordinariness, intimacy, and equality, rather than extraordinariness, perfection, glamour, and distance (Hou, 2019).

The relationships among themes and sub-themes are illustrated in the following model:

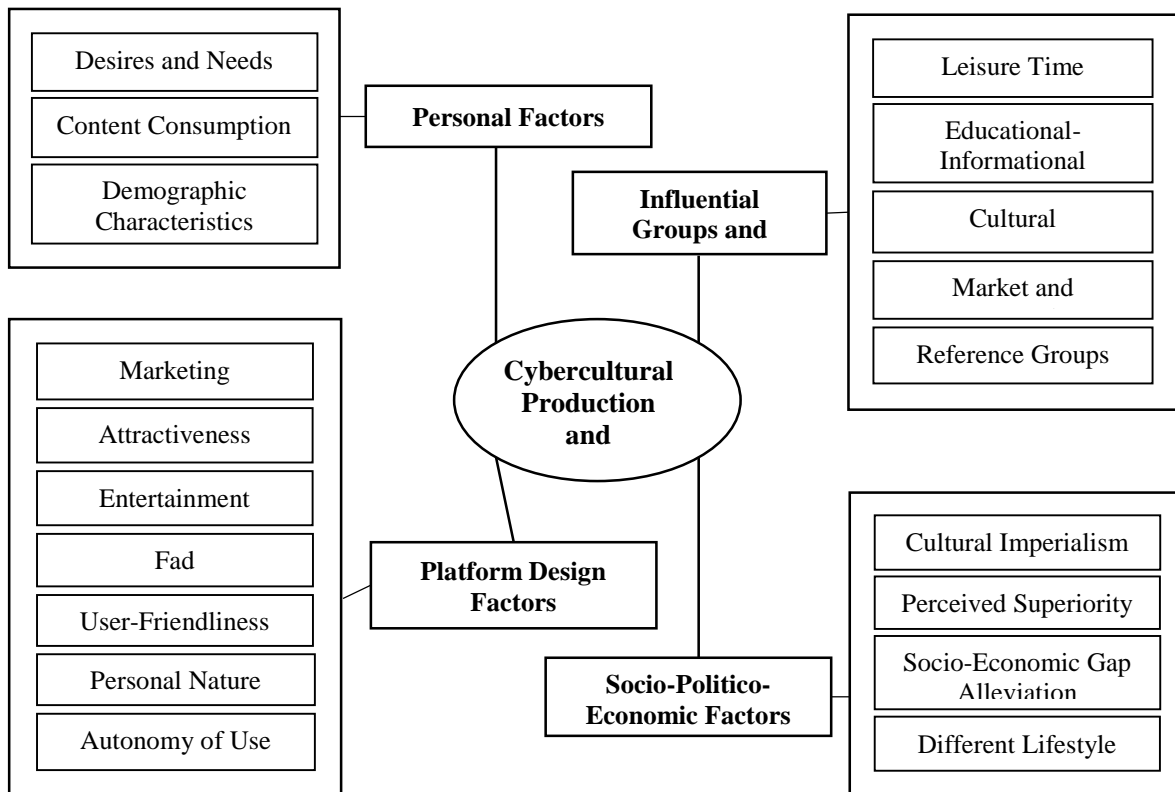


Figure 1: A Model for Cyber-Acculturative Factors Influencing Cybercultural Production and Consumption

### 3. Conclusion

The current research has developed a qualitative model for cyber-acculturative factors influencing cybercultural production and consumption from a cultural economic perspective. Our findings can guide governments and businesses in understanding how cyber-acculturation impacts social media users' content production and consumption, and subsequently, how these changes can shape real market production and consumption trends, and the overall economic landscape. This research contributes to the

existing literature on economy, especially the (cyber)cultural economy, by introducing the concept of cyber-acculturation and its impact on cultural production and consumption. The research is limited to its Iranian cultural characteristics and Instagram context. Hence, further studies across different cultures and various social media platforms are recommended. We also recommend further research adopting a cyber-acculturative perspective to study social media users' behaviors. The study of cyber-acculturation is crucial for navigating the evolving

digital landscape and its implications for economy and culture.

**Ethical Consideration:** This research is conducted with full consideration of research ethics throughout all phases.

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