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Cultural Journalism and Collective Identity: A Comparative Study of Traditional Culture on Television and YouTube Media

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Abstract---Cultural content production is not merely a form of entertainment but a symbolic communication practice that shapes collective identity. Drawing on James Carey's transmission and ritual models of communication, this study examines how cultural journalism operates in preserving traditional culture through two media platforms: RTV's Dubi children's program and the Ayodya Pala Foundation's YouTube channel. Using a qualitative comparative case study with in-depth interviews, participant observation, and semiotic analysis, the research highlights how media create symbolic spaces where children actively engage with traditional dance, folklore, and cultural symbols. The findings reveal that Dubi exemplifies ritual communication by involving child hosts in cultural practices and presenting simple, repetitive narratives tailored for young audiences. In contrast, Ayodya Pala adapts its content to digital formats by creating shorter videos, incorporating interactive features, and utilizing symbolic representation to engage younger generations. Both platforms embed values such as cooperation, tolerance, and harmony, reinforcing culture as a lived and shared experience; yet, they face challenges including funding limitations, commercial pressures, and minority representation. The study concludes that cultural journalism sustains the relevance of traditional culture in the digital era and offers practical insights for media practitioners and policymakers to design inclusive strategies for cultural preservation.

Keywords---collective identity, cultural journalism, media convergence, ritual communication, traditional culture.

Introduction

The rapid transformation of the global media landscape has profoundly reshaped how culture is produced, circulated, and experienced. The rise of digital platforms, alongside the persistence of broadcast media, has created hybrid spaces in which globalised entertainment and local cultural practices intersect. Scholars argue that these convergences are not neutral but actively reshape symbolic practices of communication, transforming the rituals through which individuals and communities experience culture (Sandikci et al., 2025). At the same time, globalisation and commercialisation have increased the risk of cultural homogenisation, particularly for younger audiences whose media consumption is dominated by algorithm-driven platforms (Alsaleh, 2024). These dynamics

make the preservation of traditional culture through media not only an educational project but also a struggle over identity and belonging in the twenty-first century.

Within this complex environment, cultural journalism has re-emerged as an important framework for analysing how media mediate tradition and cultural meaning. While journalism is often associated with news and information delivery, cultural journalism concerns itself with symbolic practices that narrate, frame, and ritualise culture for public understanding (Kristensen & From, 2015). James W. Carey's distinction between the transmission model, focused on communication as the transfer of information, and the ritual model, focused on communication as the construction of shared meaning, remains foundational for this field (Carey, 2008). Recent scholarship has extended Carey's insights to digital environments, arguing that ritual practices are increasingly performed through participatory affordances such as commenting, sharing, and co-creation (Kristensen & From, 2015). These developments underscore the enduring significance of ritual communication in sustaining cultural identity, even as the mediums through which rituals unfold continue to evolve.

Research on cultural journalism in digital contexts has documented the emergence of diverse formats ranging from long-form essays to short videos and community archives. YouTube, TikTok, and other platforms have been shown to enable hybrid forms of cultural expression that combine entertainment, pedagogy, and symbolic performance (Jenkins, 2006). These platforms not only disseminate cultural information but also create interactive spaces where rituals of cultural recognition and identity construction are enacted. Yet studies also caution that digital spaces are unevenly accessible, shaped by algorithmic bias, commercial pressures, and the limited visibility of minority cultures (Okoronkwo, 2024). Thus, while digital platforms offer new opportunities for cultural preservation, they also raise questions about sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity.

The Indonesian context provides a particularly fertile ground for examining these issues. Indonesia is home to a vast array of traditional cultural practices, many of which face the dual pressures of declining intergenerational transmission and the dominance of global popular culture. Television continues to play a significant role in cultural communication, especially for children, through programs that incorporate folklore, music, and dance. RTV's *Dubi* program, for instance, introduces traditional practices to young audiences in accessible and entertaining formats, emphasising repetition, narrative simplicity, and performative participation. Parallel to this, cultural organisations such as the Ayodya Pala Foundation leverage YouTube to document, preserve, and disseminate cultural performances, using the flexibility of digital platforms to reach younger, digitally native audiences. Both cases illustrate the dual role of media as sites of preservation and transformation, where cultural meaning is both transmitted and ritualized (Jenkins, 2000).

Despite growing scholarly attention to cultural journalism, research has tended to focus on either television or digital media in isolation. Studies on Indonesian television highlight the potential of broadcast media to promote cultural heritage but often note limitations such as funding constraints and commercial imperatives (Sooai et al., 2023). Research on digital platforms, by contrast, tends to emphasise participatory potential and community engagement but rarely considers how these practices compare with institutional broadcast traditions (Kristensen & From, 2015). This separation has left a gap in understanding how traditional and digital media differently, and sometimes complementarily, enact cultural journalism in relation to cultural identity. Comparative studies remain scarce, particularly those that explore children's programming and the symbolic processes by which collective identity is nurtured.

This study seeks to fill that gap by conducting a comparative analysis of cultural journalism across television and YouTube, focusing specifically on RTV's *Dubi* and the Ayodya Pala Foundation's channel. By applying Carey's transmission and ritual models of communication, the research examines how traditional culture is represented, performed, and reimaged for young audiences. The study pays particular attention to symbolic elements such as costumes, music, folklore, and performative practices, as well as the communicative logics that differentiate broadcast and digital environments.

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit comparative design. While much scholarship has examined cultural journalism in either television or digital settings, few studies have systematically compared how these platforms shape collective identity through ritual communication. By juxtaposing institutional broadcast practices with community-driven digital initiatives, this research provides fresh insights into how media convergence enables both continuity and innovation in cultural preservation. In doing so, it expands the theoretical application of Carey's cultural model beyond Western contexts, demonstrating its relevance for Indonesian media and cultural practices in the digital age.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it advances theoretical debates on cultural journalism by showing how ritual and transmission models interact across different media ecologies. Second, it provides empirical evidence on the strategies and challenges of cultural preservation in Indonesia, highlighting both the opportunities of

youth engagement and the limitations posed by funding and representation. Third, it offers practical recommendations for media practitioners and policymakers seeking to design inclusive and sustainable cultural programming. By situating cultural journalism at the intersection of tradition, media convergence, and collective identity, the study illuminates how symbolic communication can sustain cultural heritage in rapidly changing media environments (Suardana et al., 2022).

Methods

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to explore how cultural journalism contributes to the preservation of traditional culture and the shaping of collective identity across two media platforms, namely RTV's *Dubi* program and the Ayodya Pala Foundation's YouTube channel. A qualitative approach was considered most suitable for capturing the symbolic, narrative, and ritual dimensions of cultural journalism as they unfold in production practices and media texts.

Data were collected through three complementary strategies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including producers of RTV's *Dubi* and content creators from the Ayodya Pala Foundation, to understand their perspectives on program objectives, production routines, audience engagement strategies, and challenges in representing traditional culture. Participant observation was also carried out during selected production sessions and cultural workshops, with field notes documenting practices, interactions, and the use of symbolic elements in the production process. In addition, a purposive sample of programs was subjected to textual and semiotic analysis, comprising episodes of *Dubi* and videos from the Ayodya Pala YouTube channel that highlighted traditional dance, music, folklore, and children's participation. The analytical focus was placed on narrative structures, symbolic representation, and ritualised communication practices.

All data were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-step procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2019), which included familiarisation with the material, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and interpreting findings in relation to James W. Carey's transmission and ritual models of communication. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and textual analysis was used to enhance the credibility of the findings and ensure that interpretations reflected multiple perspectives. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, with participants providing informed consent and confidentiality maintained through the use of pseudonyms where necessary.

Findings

The *Dubi* program on RTV presents traditional culture through a format specifically tailored for young audiences. Observations of the episodes show that children are given central roles as presenters, dancers, and narrators, ensuring that they do not remain passive viewers but instead participate directly in the performance of culture. According to the producer, this choice reflects a deliberate attempt to design the program in a way that allows children to engage with cultural practices in accessible and enjoyable forms.

The program is characterised by a simple and repetitive narrative structure. Folktales, motivational songs, and traditional dances are performed in short segments, often repeated across episodes to build recognition among viewers aged six to ten. Costumes, gamelan instruments, and community-based settings, such as rice fields, village halls, and temples, are consistently used as part of the stage design. These elements not only create a visually appealing performance but also provide children with a concrete sense of cultural familiarity.

Production practices rely heavily on collaboration with local cultural groups. The Ayodya Pala Studio, for instance, contributes choreography and training, while parents and teachers often assist during rehearsals and recording sessions. Such collaborations indicate that the program is not produced in isolation within a studio environment but depends on community participation to ensure cultural accuracy and relevance. Interviews with the production team further revealed that research visits to schools and children's art studios preceded the selection of performers and storylines, confirming that the program was shaped to suit the developmental stage of its audience.



The first screenshot shows a young girl in a light blue shirt and a headband, holding a microphone and speaking. A banner at the bottom of the video frame reads "Kemilau Reporter Dubi". The second screenshot shows a group of children in traditional Javanese dance costumes (pink blouses and brown batik sarongs with yellow sashes) performing a dance on a stage. A banner at the bottom of the video frame reads "Seperti Budayanya, Tari Jawa Memiliki Gerakan Yang Teratur, tenang dan halus".

Liputan Dubi - Sanggar Ayodya Pala

Panggung Dubi - RTV
343K subscribers

31 Share Download Save

Liputan Dubi - Sanggar Ayodya Pala

Panggung Dubi - RTV
343K subscribers

Summarize

31 Share Download

1,483 views Oct 3, 2019
Dubi Dubi Dam adalah program anak yang dikemas apik menggabungkan unsur edukatif dan entertainment (edutainment). Mengajak anak-anak untuk tetap cinta dan melestarikan lagu anak-anak Indonesia. Yuk, menyanyi, menari dan bergembira bersama teman-teman kita di Dubi Dubi Dam RTV. Jangan lupa like, comment, subscribe & share channel youtube Dubi Dubi Dam RTV!!
Tonton terus yaa program Dubi Dubi Dam di RTV makin cakep!!!

Figure 1. Children as Hosts and Performers in RTV's *Dubi* Program

Figure 1 illustrates two key roles assigned to children in the *Dubi* program. The first screenshot shows a child acting as a reporter, introducing the segment in a lively and accessible manner, while the second captures a group of children performing Javanese dance in traditional costumes. Together, these images demonstrate the program's

strategy of placing children at the center of cultural storytelling, not only as narrators but also as performers. Such visual design reinforces the program's intention to present culture as something that children can actively embody and share with their peers.

Cultural Meaning Construction through Semiotic Representation

The *Dubi* program integrates a range of cultural elements into its presentation for children. Traditional costumes, gamelan instruments, and rural settings such as rice fields and temples are consistently used as stage design and performance backdrops. These visual and auditory features serve as direct markers of Indonesian heritage, making cultural signs easily recognisable to young viewers.

Children play prominent roles in the program. Rather than being limited to passive narration, they appear as hosts, performers, and storytellers. This design creates a sense of intimacy and familiarity between cultural performances and the audience, reinforcing the program's orientation toward accessibility for children. Interviews with the production team indicated that research visits to schools and studios preceded the selection of participants and storylines, ensuring that both the language and choreography were adapted to children's developmental stages.

Community reception of the program highlighted positive responses to children's involvement. Parents and local audiences valued the opportunity for children to participate directly in cultural practices, viewing it as both a learning activity and a means of preserving traditions. The integration of performance, narration, and interactive segments also demonstrated how the program balanced entertainment with cultural education.

Ayodya Pala Content Production

The Ayodya Pala Foundation developed its YouTube channel with three main objectives: documenting traditions at risk of decline, increasing the visibility of cultural performances, and providing recognition for artists and communities. According to interviews with the head of the foundation, digital archiving was regarded as an essential strategy to ensure that younger generations could continue to access local traditions.

The production process followed a deliberate workflow. Each video began with research into folktales or historical references before a script was drafted. Scripts were revised several times to maintain cultural accuracy while remaining accessible for children. Performances were staged with traditional costumes and props, supported by modern filming techniques and narrated in a light, documentary style. After publication, responses through views, likes, and comments were reviewed by the production team to inform subsequent videos.

Adaptation to digital media required further adjustments. Video duration was reduced to five to eight minutes, narration styles were conversational rather than formal, and animations with colourful subtitles were added to clarify cultural symbols. The team also encouraged audience interaction by using polls, Q&A sessions, and invitations to submit cultural content. These features helped transform the channel into a more participatory space while maintaining a focus on cultural preservation.

Although the channel's audience remained modest compared to mainstream entertainment, interaction was particularly strong for videos featuring rituals and festivals. This trend reflected broader patterns in digital engagement, where cultural relevance and high production quality stimulated stronger responses. Interviews further indicated that the production team deliberately introduced cultural values into the content, including cooperation (*gotong royong*), harmony with nature, tolerance, and local wisdom. These values were embedded in performances and storytelling, making the channel both an educational and cultural resource.

Comparative Features and Challenges

The comparative analysis of RTV's *Dubi* program and Ayodya Pala's YouTube channel shows differences in format and strategy, but also several shared constraints. RTV relied on structured episodes within the routines of broadcast television, while the YouTube channel emphasised short, flexible, and interactive productions. Both, however, sought to make traditional culture visible and engaging to younger audiences.

Table 1
Comparative Features of Cultural Journalism in RTV and YouTube

Aspect	RTV's <i>Dubi</i>	Ayodya Pala YouTube
Audience focus	Children aged 6–10	Youth and general audiences
Participation	Child hosts in live performances	Viewers interact via comments, polls, and Q&A
Narrative style	Simple, repetitive storytelling	Short, dynamic, conversational tone
Cultural symbols	Costumes, gamelan, folklore, local backdrops	Costumes, props, animations, subtitles
Production process	Structured, institutional	Community-based, flexible
Communication model	Ritual focus, limited transmission	Ritual dominant with educational transmission
Challenges	Funding, commercial pressure, and minority representation	Audience engagement, resource limits

Beyond these features, both platforms faced common challenges. RTV contended with limited sponsorship and competition from commercial entertainment shows, while the YouTube channel struggled with restricted resources and algorithm-driven visibility. Representations of minority traditions were also less frequent in both settings.

Table 2
Challenges in Cultural Journalism Across RTV and YouTube

Challenge	RTV's <i>Dubi</i> Program	Ayodya Pala YouTube Channel	Implications for Cultural Journalism
Funding	Relies on limited sponsorship; cultural content less attractive for commercial advertisers.	Operates with minimal resources; production is community-based and voluntary.	Sustainability of cultural programming is fragile without institutional or governmental support.
Commercial Pressures	Competes with entertainment-focused children's shows that prioritise ratings.	Competes with algorithm-driven content that favours popular entertainment genres.	Cultural journalism risks marginalisation in competitive media markets.
Representation of Minority Cultures	Limited inclusion due to constraints of broadcast format and regional focus.	Broader potential, but minority content often receives fewer views and less engagement.	Ensuring cultural diversity remains a challenge across platforms.
Technological Visibility	Broadcast limited to regional audiences; constrained by airtime slots.	Dependent on YouTube algorithms; visibility reduced without active promotion.	Both platforms face systemic barriers to reaching wider audiences.
Community Engagement	Relies on partnerships with local cultural studios (e.g., Sanggar Ayodya Pala).	Relies on interactive features (comments, polls), but audience participation remains modest.	Engagement strategies must be continually adapted to sustain ritual communication.

These findings suggest that cultural journalism is shaped not only by creative practices but also by structural and institutional pressures. Sustainability depends on resource availability, audience engagement, and the ability to balance cultural preservation with the demands of commercial and digital media environments.

Discussion

Ritual Communication as a Framework for Cultural Journalism

This study examined how cultural journalism can contribute to cultural preservation and collective identity through two contrasting platforms: RTV's *Dubi* television program and the Ayodya Pala Foundation's YouTube channel. Recent scholarship has highlighted that cultural journalism, whether institutional or community-based, plays a crucial role in mediating heritage and shaping shared identities, particularly in the context of globalisation and digital transformation (Yao, 2025). Despite operating in distinct media environments, both demonstrate the enduring relevance of Carey's ritual model of communication, in which communication is less about transferring information and more about sustaining shared meaning over time (Carey, 2008).

The findings show that ritual communication is enacted differently across platforms: television emphasises structured participation through institutional routines, while YouTube cultivates interactive participation and digital co-presence. This suggests that Carey's ideas, although formulated in a pre-digital context, remain pertinent but must be reframed to account for hybrid, multi-platform practices (Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Alsaleh, 2024).

Transmission and Ritual Models across Media Ecologies

The comparative analysis highlights the coexistence of transmission and ritual functions in cultural journalism. *Dubi* foregrounds ritual by positioning children as cultural actors, hosts, dancers, and narrators, who embody tradition through repeated practices. By contrast, Ayodya Pala's YouTube channel integrates transmission functions (factual explanations, historical context) with ritual dimensions (audience interaction through comments, sharing, and co-creation).

This hybridity demonstrates that contemporary media practices are not governed by a strict dichotomy between transmission and ritual, but rather by overlapping and interacting communicative logics within convergent platforms (Hallin et al., 2023; Rauch, 2023). The case of Ayodya Pala highlights this negotiation vividly: as Denta Mandra Pradipta explained, "We adjust the stories based on the audience so they remain relevant." His remark exemplifies how cultural-journalistic practice continually negotiates the delivery of factual knowledge and the cultivation of ritualized meaning, an orientation documented in studies of cultural journalism and participatory production (Kristensen & From, 2015). That balancing act also aligns with analyses that treat narrative practices as affective rituals shaping collective identity rather than as mere information flows (Bastos & Tuters, 2023).

A parallel logic appears in *Dubi*'s migration from television to YouTube, where platform affordances sustain ritual engagement (sharing, commenting, and re-creation) even as they enable informational transmission, a dynamic consistent with accounts of the mediated construction of social reality in platformed media (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Finally, we should remember that such hybridity unfolds within power-laden institutional and material conditions: hybrid forms emerge from and are constrained by social relations, resource distributions, and hegemonic structures (Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2025).

Children as Active Cultural Actors in Identity Formation

One of the most significant contributions of this study lies in highlighting the role of children as active cultural participants rather than passive audiences. In *Dubi*, children host, narrate, and perform, transforming television from a medium of consumption into a site of enactment. As the producer Reza Romadhona explained, the program was deliberately designed so that "children could directly take part in cultural activities, not only as performers but also as storytellers."

This resonates with a growing body of research demonstrating that when young people are actively involved in cultural production, they develop stronger identity attachments, a sense of belonging, and developmental competencies. For instance, narrative storytelling across generations has been shown to instill core cultural values such as collective personhood and filial piety (Sun, 2023). Moreover, longitudinal studies of intergenerational cultural socialization indicate that early engagement in cultural practices fosters social, linguistic, and interactive capacities in children (Williams et al., 2020).

In parallel, examples such as youth-driven communication in cultural events illustrate how participatory roles can serve as catalysts for emotional engagement and well-being through cultural identification (Puccia et al., 2025). By enabling children to embody culture through performance and narration, cultural journalism thus becomes a powerful mechanism for intergenerational identity transmission and communal belonging.

Digital Platforms as Dialogic Spaces for Cultural Preservation

Ayodya Pala's YouTube channel demonstrates how digital platforms can move beyond static archiving to create dialogic spaces for cultural engagement. Motivated by the goal of preservation, as Budi Agustinah stressed, "We want to archive these dances digitally so that future generations can access them," the foundation employs strategies such as interactive Q&A sessions, polls, and calls for user-generated content.

These features transform cultural journalism into a participatory practice in which audiences co-create meaning rather than consume it passively. Scholarship on digital heritage underscores that online platforms are no longer limited to the preservation of cultural artifacts but increasingly serve as spaces for building **collaborative cultural memory** and shared identity. For example, UNESCO (2025) highlights how digital platforms democratize collective memory, enabling diverse communities to actively engage in preserving and reinterpreting cultural pasts.

Similarly, [Ginzarly & Teller \(2025\)](#) propose a people-centred framework showing how social media affordances foster community resilience by involving individuals directly in the co-construction of heritage values and practices. Taken together, these perspectives affirm that cultural journalism in digital environments functions not merely as documentation but as an **evolving ritual of belonging**, sustaining intergenerational ties and reinforcing cultural identity through participatory engagement.

Negotiating Challenges: Commercial, Algorithmic, and Institutional Pressures

Despite their achievements, both RTV and Ayodya Pala face structural challenges that reflect broader tensions in cultural media. For Dubi, limited funding and the dominance of commercial programming restrict the scope of cultural initiatives, making it difficult to compete with more profitable entertainment formats. Meanwhile, Ayodya Pala operates under resource constraints that require producers to shorten videos, simplify narratives, and carefully moderate comments to preserve cultural focus and maintain audience engagement.

These challenges highlight how cultural journalism is shaped not only by cultural intentions but also by systemic pressures embedded in institutional and platform logics. As [Smrdelj & Pajnik \(2025\)](#) argue, hybrid media systems are conditioned by broader structural and power relations that shape what kinds of cultural content can circulate. Similarly, [Kristensen & From \(2015\)](#) remind us that cultural journalism operates at the intersection of professional norms and participatory practices, often negotiating between openness and editorial stewardship. The moderation strategies adopted by Ayodya Pala thus illustrate this tension: while digital platforms invite openness and interactivity, cultural preservation requires selective curation to ensure that communal values remain central.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study makes three main contributions to media and cultural studies. First, it reaffirms that ritual communication remains central across evolving media systems, supporting Carey's claim that communication is fundamentally a symbolic process of sustaining community ([Couldry & Hepp, 2017](#)). Second, it demonstrates that children's active participation in cultural journalism functions as a powerful mechanism of identity formation, echoing research showing how intergenerational cultural socialization fosters belonging and developmental competencies ([Williams et al., 2020](#)). Third, it shows that digital platforms, when strategically managed, can operate as dialogic archives where cultural values are not only transmitted but re-enacted through interactive participation, an observation consistent with recent scholarship on digital heritage and collaborative cultural memory ([Ginzarly & Teller, 2025](#); UNESCO, 2025).

By integrating findings from both broadcast and digital contexts, this study extends Carey's ritual model into contemporary hybrid media ecologies, highlighting how ritual and transmission logics overlap rather than diverge ([Smrdelj & Pajnik, 2025](#)). Ultimately, cultural journalism should be understood not as a narrow journalistic genre but as a symbolic practice that mediates tradition, sustains collective identity, and negotiates the systemic pressures of globalized media systems.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that cultural journalism, as applied in RTV's *Dubi* program and the Ayodya Pala Foundation's YouTube channel, functions as a symbolic space where traditional culture is preserved and collective identity is nurtured. While television provides structured, community-based participation and YouTube offers interactive, flexible engagement, both embody Carey's ritual model of communication in ways that connect younger

generations to cultural heritage. The findings highlight that cultural journalism is not only a medium of storytelling but also a practice of identity construction sustained through symbols, narratives, and communal experiences.

The study contributes by offering a comparative perspective across broadcast and digital media, an approach rarely applied in cultural journalism research. Its novelty lies in showing how different platforms negotiate the preservation of culture under structural pressures, particularly commercial constraints and resource limitations. Practically, the results suggest that sustainable cultural programming requires stronger institutional support, creative adaptation, and inclusive strategies that bridge generational gaps. In this sense, cultural journalism remains vital for safeguarding traditions and reinforcing collective identity in the digital age.

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