

**How Globalization Through New Media Creates More Cultural Diversity:
Ethiopian Diaspora**

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Globalization through new media has reshaped the way our culture produces, distributes, and consumes media today. With platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, globalization makes it possible for cultural content to quickly cross borders with a simple click of a button. Contrary to past eras marked by one-way communication and Western-dominated culture, our society's connectivity today has created a new era of cultural diversity where marginalized voices and non-Western content creators are able to share their perspectives with global audiences. Although there remains some level of Western-dominated influence over technology, globalization has inspired cultural diversity through its intercultural dialogue, empowerment of marginalized voices, and most of all its ability to showcase different cultural creative expressions (Shabir et al., 2015). For diasporic communities, digital media provides new opportunities to preserve culture, maintain language, and pass on traditions to the next generation. As an Ethiopian myself, the effects of globalization through new media are evident. In the Ethiopian diaspora, members use social media and other digital technologies in efforts to accomplish cultural continuity while adapting to different global contexts.

New media are digital and networked technologies that facilitate interaction, participation, and communication across communities. Flew and Smith (2021) consider new media to be the convergence of computing, communication, and content, emphasizing that technology today allows people to produce and share information in ways we have not been able to before (p. 3). The 3 C's of convergence allow for voices and perspectives to be shared in public communication, which leads to higher cultural diversity in global media contexts. Digital globalization has allowed information and creativity to spread hand in hand. The digitization of communication has allowed for people with different cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds to exchange perspectives in real time, fostering a sense of global interconnectedness (Chen, 2024). As Kebede (2019) reports in his study of diaspora Ethiopians in America, he found the best way local second-generation Ethiopians stayed connected amidst their communities was on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The Ethiopian diaspora, scattered across North America, Europe, and the Middle East, being able to access media, is an example of how globalization through new media promotes cultural diversity. YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram all allow Ethiopian communities to offer language lessons, cooking classes, and traditional music performances to younger generations who may possibly have been born outside Ethiopia. These posts transform new media into spaces of cultural learning and belonging, preserving identity and culture in spite of distances. As Flew and Smith (2021) claim, these platforms that are considered participatory media ensure that cultural preservation is not top-down; rather, it involves members of the community interacting with their traditions in their unique ways. It allows groups that were previously excluded from mainstream media to have the freedom to share their own stories.

It is a daily challenge for most diasporic children in Ethiopian families to maintain their culture in countries different from their parents. I have experienced this firsthand as a first-generation Canadian child of my Ethiopian parents. It is hard to learn and preserve a culture in a country that does not locally recognize it. Children born overseas are likely to be surrounded by dominant Western culture making the bridge between their heritage and homeland quite a “complex process” (Al-deen & Mansouri, 2024, p. 10). However, digital globalization offers a solution to connect intergenerational and cultural divides. Ethiopians, as an example are able to utilize media platforms such as YouTube sites, podcasts, and Instagram pages to teach Amharic, share traditional recipes, and offer Ethiopian history and customs through popular youth-targeted media. These new media spaces allow Canadian, American, and European youth to access Ethiopian identity in ways that fit the parameters of their digital lives. These media practices demonstrate the globalization that Flew and Smith (2021) conceptualize, where global and local components come together to produce hybridity in culture and expression. Ethiopian diaspora media is inclined to merge traditional music and clothing with Western modes of production and the English language, making it accessible both to Ethiopians in diaspora and non-Ethiopian listeners. The result is not cultural homogenization but a rich hybrid identity. One that honors tradition while still recognizing global engagement.

One of the most profound effects of new media on cultural diversity is its ability to create intergenerational bonds. Younger generations in Ethiopian diaspora communities (such as myself) experience a large cultural gap with older generations. This gap leads to disconnecting with heritage and language. Digital media helps close this gap by creating shared spaces for learning and communication between parents and children. As Flew and Smith (2021) state, new media has allowed for “‘Demassification’ of access to and use of media content; [allowing for] new opportunities for users to become media producers.” (p. 72). Through Ethiopian traditional dance challenges on TikTok, family vlogs of holiday celebrations like Meskel and Timkat, or YouTube tutorials on Ethiopian coffee ceremonies, youth now have the ability to engage with culture in creative and interactive ways. New media serves as a virtual preservation of identity, making traditions seen and accessible on an ongoing basis. Ethiopian diaspora youth have the ability to remix global media genres like vlogs or reaction videos to express their heritage and experiences as multicultural subjects. By doing this, they contribute to cultural diversity, and they create a space for diaspora youth to connect and relate. Additionally, through their participation in content that showcases Ethiopian culture, it increases the diversity of media and increases Ethiopian representation globally. Posting online allows young people to be empowered by reimagining what it means to belong. Rather than viewing their culture as inherited or static, new media has allowed diasporic youth to view their culture as participatory, a space in which they can interact with it and actively play a part.

One of the most prominent elements of cultural diversity in new media is gender representation. As Flew and Smith (2021) mention, there has been a history of underrepresentation for women in technology (p. 181). Diaspora women from Ethiopia have been able to use the internet to change stereotypes and take charge of their cultural representation. Examples of these female content creators that I watch would be Elena Sing and Xara Beqele. These women content creators utilize beauty, lifestyle, and educational content to present how they blend dual worlds, one of Ethiopian virtues and one of Western realities. By producing their own content, these women actively act against Western-influenced and patriarchal discourses, putting forward genuine perceptions that expand global understanding of Ethiopian womanhood. Ethiopian diaspora women exemplify empowerment by using digital spaces to set representation on their own terms. Content like theirs not only enriches Ethiopian diaspora culture but also enhances intersectional diversity in global media. The multitude of women, immigrants, and youth voices adds substance to the global conversation on identity, belonging, and modernization. All further contributing to a greater presence of diversity through new media.

New media globalization has given the Ethiopian diaspora an unprecedented ability to maintain and reproduce cultural identity internationally. Although there may still remain a higher number of Western culture presented in the media, diasporic creators can and have used participatory media to preserve language, traditions, and values to share with local and global communities. From intergenerational ties to gender representation, globalization has allowed for a marginalized group, such as the Ethiopian diaspora to be empowered through new media. The new media employed by the Ethiopian diaspora demonstrate how diversity can be promoted via technology as a space for storytelling, instruction, and empowerment. In a more interconnected world, these acts of cultural innovation and preservation show that diversity is not lost in globalization; rather, it is recycled through it.

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