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THE TRANSNATIONAL LENS: AN INTEGRATIVE REVIEW OF AUDIENCE RECEPTION AND INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE IN GLOBAL MEDIA

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Abstract:
The rapid expansion of digital streaming and the complexity of cross-border audience engagement define the contemporary media landscape. Despite increasing transnational content flows, scholarly literature remains fragmented because existing reviews treat audience reception within isolated regional or sectoral contexts, failing to integrate digital platform mechanisms with audience agency across non-Western flows. This integrative review synthesizes peer-reviewed literature from 2004 to 2025 to re-evaluate audience reception and intercultural exchange through a transnational lens. Organized around four core pillars, the synthesis demonstrates that: (1) Theoretical Shifts reveal a move from unidirectional cultural dominance toward audience negotiation; (2) Glocalization illustrates how local narrative adaptation reduces audience disconnects caused by unfamiliar cultural markers; (3) Platformed Engagement highlights how algorithmic curation and platform infrastructure shape viewing habits; and (4) Diasporic Interactions demonstrate how migrant communities negotiate identity through dual local-global media fares. The article also maps the evolution of global media studies in the digital era. Findings indicate that non-Western media flows and active decoding challenge Western-centric models of media influence. More effective intercultural exchange occurs when media platforms balance algorithmic distribution with localized narrative adaptation. Theoretically, this review proposes a model of cultural assemblage that extends existing theories of glocalization and active audiences by accounting for how platform algorithms, local user practices, and non-Western flows converge dynamically. Practically, it offers actionable recommendations for platform governance, content policy, and industry localization practices

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to foster balanced global media interactions within a culturally divergent global entertainment ecosystem.

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Keywords:

Audience Reception, Cultural Hybridity, Glocalization, Intercultural Exchange, Narrative Review, Platform Governance, Transnational Media.

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Introduction

The modern media context is dynamic, as media content is transmitted across national boundaries due to advances in digital streaming technologies and the globalization of entertainment industries. As media products traverse the globe from their respective origins, they participate in complicated networks of intercultural exchange, challenging traditional views on the nation and cultural sovereignty. While early research focused on the relations between cultures in the framework of the cultural imperialism paradigm, assuming one-directional influences of Westernization (Banjo & Umunna, 2022), current academic research reveals a more complicated pattern – "glocal". Global stories adjust to specific sociocultural contexts along the way.

However, despite the increasing amount of transnational media content, the field remains highly fragmented. Available information on audience reception is scattered across different fields, creating obstacles to synthesizing conceptual knowledge (Athique, 2014). Terminological problems also contribute to fragmentation since researchers tend to use interchangeable notions like transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and glocalization making it hard to identify the actual processes underlying cultural exchanges. Moreover, current sectorial literature clearly demonstrates imbalances: an excessive number of studies on media exports from the West and an insufficient number of studies on media exports from outside the West, including the rise of Chinese digital dramas around the globe (Fu & Wang, 2025).

This imbalance poses a dilemma for both academics and practitioners. Disparities in implementation models used in cross-cultural communication strategy formation often lead to misunderstandings about how cultural symbols are interpreted when media travels between two ideologically different cultures (Abubakar, 2013). Besides, while virtual spaces and diaspora offer promising opportunities for developing intercultural literacy skills (Diehl &

Prins, 2008; Smets, 2013), no policies effectively regulate these processes. Thus, without proper synthesis, the subject matter will remain fragmented.

Therefore, a comprehensive review would be a necessary step toward overcoming theoretical and empirical gaps. By incorporating ethnographic techniques, comparing audiences, and examining the role of digital media and technologies, the review can move beyond "banal cosmopolitanism" as a description of global consumption (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009; Murphy & Kraidy, 2004). Thus, a review would help reveal common patterns underlying these audience experiences, from the cognitive processes of Nordic Noir viewers to those of virtual world participants (Hill, 2018; Diehl & Prins, 2008).

This paper reviews the existing academic literature on audience reception and intercultural exchange in transnational media settings, with a particular focus on discrepancies between audience theory and practice. To accomplish this task, this paper is divided into four main parts. The first part will trace the theoretical development of the area, from the concept of cultural imperialism to hybridity. The second part will focus on the effect of digital media and streaming services on the localization of global stories.

Review Approach

This study employs an integrative review method to synthesize empirical studies and theories from different sub-disciplines in transnational media studies. Unlike systematic reviews that apply PRISMA guidelines, this research uses a narrative integration method, making it easier to integrate diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from other disciplines in the broad and complex field of media studies (Hill, 2018). Peer-reviewed, high-impact literature is identified through a rigorous review conducted in one database: Scopus.

In this study, complex Boolean search strings were used to retrieve the intersection of geographic mobility, media platform, and cultural identity. The search period for the literature review ranged from 2004 to 2025 to cover the field's evolution from early ethnographic studies on global media (Murphy & Kraidy, 2004) to the contemporary streaming era and the emergence of strong audiences (Fu & Wang, 2025). The literature was searched systematically using Scopus with the following keyword query: ("transnational" OR "global" OR "international" OR "cross-border") AND ("media" OR "communication" OR "broadcasting" OR "journalism") AND ("perspective" OR "lens" OR "framework" OR "viewpoint") AND ("cultural exchange" OR "representation" OR "narrative" OR "discourse") AND ("audience" OR "viewership" OR "consumption" OR "engagement") AND ("identity" OR "migration" OR "diaspora" OR "globalization").

Peer-reviewed journal articles in English published between 2004 and 2025 meeting the following three criteria were selected: (1) peer-reviewed and published in English, (2) focusing on cross-border audience reception or media consumption, and (3) making a substantial theoretical and empirical contribution. Editorials and non-peer-reviewed literature, as well as single-nation policy studies without audience data, were excluded. In this literature review, “high-impact literature” refers to peer-reviewed studies that introduced foundational theories such as the active audience paradigm and glocalization.

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Table 1: Search Strategy

Feature	Description
Database	Scopus
Search String	("transnational" OR "global" OR "international" OR "cross-border") AND ("media" OR "communication" OR "broadcasting" OR "journalism") AND ("perspective" OR "lens" OR "framework" OR "viewpoint") AND ("cultural exchange" OR "representation" OR "narrative" OR "discourse") AND ("audience" OR "viewership" OR "consumption" OR "engagement") AND ("identity" OR "migration" OR "diaspora" OR "globalization")
Timeframe	2004 – 2025
Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed journal articles; focus on transnational/global audience reception; theoretical or empirical relevance to intercultural exchange; English language.
Exclusion Criteria	Conference abstracts; non-English publications; studies focused exclusively on national media policy without audience data; editorials or book reviews.
Selection Approach	Narrative synthesis focusing on theoretical evolution, methodological diversity, and emerging digital trends.

Conceptual Background

Definitions

To analyze media phenomena that cross national boundaries, it is necessary to clearly define terms that often overlap in colloquial language but carry different analytical value in academic literature. The first key concept for this analysis is transnational media, which refers to the flow of media that goes beyond national boundaries and creates a space where the global and local meet (Athique, 2014). Transnational media differ from international media in that the latter term usually implies the exchange of information from one state to another. In contrast, transnational media focus on the fluidity of cultural products and the decentralization of digital distribution (Fu & Wang, 2025). Intercultural exchange in audience reception is also a key concept in this analysis and refers to the receiver's decoding of media messages and their integration into their experience (Hill, 2018). Intercultural exchange appears in the interaction between the primary cultural identity of the person who receives media information and the

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foreign values or narratives presented there. This exchange is never neutral and is always accompanied by the phenomenon called "cultural discount".

Key Theories or Frameworks

Academic studies of reception have shifted from the notion of audiences as passive consumers to one that recognizes the complex nature of audience activity. Earlier, cultural imperialism theory held sway, arguing that Western (particularly American) media had a hegemonic role in influencing audiences worldwide. This trend is seen in the continued preference for American programming in places like Nigeria (Banjo & Umunna, 2022). Conversely, recent research focuses more on the concept of the active audience and the encoding-decoding model, which states that audiences are not passive consumers of culture but active decoders of it in line with their unique cultural contexts (Abubakar, 2013).

Furthermore, glocalization provides an important theoretical perspective for studying how global formats adapt to local contexts. To study the deeper psychological and social mechanisms involved in these processes, scholars often use Hofstede's cultural dimensions, exploring how orientations toward individualism and collectivism affect audience motivations and the acceptance of contraflows from abroad (Abubakar, 2013). Last but not least, the concept of banal cosmopolitanism suggests that for most modern viewers, consuming media products from other countries (Nordic Noir shows, C-dramas, etc.) is an ordinary part of daily life (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009; Hill, 2018).

Strengthening the Research Gap

Despite the proliferation of transnational content, academic knowledge remains deeply fragmented. Previous reviews have evaluated active audience theory or localized media production in isolation, but they consistently fail to integrate three intersecting realities of the modern streaming era:

- Algorithmic platform curation: how infrastructure and platform logic dictate visibility and engagement.
- Non-Western media exports: the global expansion and reception of non-Western media (for example, Chinese, South Korean, and Indian digital media) in Western and South-South contexts.
- Active audience decoding: the cognitive and cultural negotiation practices of viewers in hyper-connected digital spaces.

This fragmentation is impaired by inconsistent terminology and an over-reliance on Western export data. Without an integrative synthesis connecting ethnographic audience practices with digital platform governance, media studies risks remaining a collection of isolated case studies rather than a unified body of knowledge.

Theoretical Novelty: The Model of Cultural Assemblage

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the proposed research introduces the concept of cultural assemblage. Existing notions such as glocalization (referring to the process of implementing global formats in local markets from above) and cultural hybridity (implying the

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fusion of two separate cultures) do not reflect the dynamics of interaction processes in modern digital media. Cultural assemblage suggests that media consumption today is non-linear and depends on the convergence of media platforms' algorithms, active user decoding, socio-political background, and decentralized content streams. The idea describes the continuous mixing, adaptation, and reconfiguration of global media content, digital technology, and audience experiences in real time. The notion of assemblage does not imply a static approach to culture and media influence; rather, it describes the complex of constantly changing components of the communication system.

Thematic Review of Literature

To achieve academic rigor and coherence in the analysis, this literature review follows a thematic structure instead of a chronological or case-by-case approach. In doing so, it enables a more comprehensive integration of the fragmented field of discussion on transnational media, allowing analysis of theoretical intersections between global production and local reception (Athique, 2014; Hill, 2018). The literature review is built around four key concepts which reflect the existing status quo of the field: (1) theoretical changes from imperialism to active reception, the evolution of the audience's agency; (2) the cultural side and the process of glocalization, the adaptation of global narratives to the sociocultural reality of the local community; (3) digital platforms and changing ways of audience engagement in relation to their impact on intercultural communication; and (4) diasporic communities and intercultural communication in cities. In this way, the literature review outlines terminology issues and imbalances in sectoral evidence, providing a roadmap for further research in cross-cultural media studies.

Theme 1: Theoretical Shifts from Imperialism to Active Reception

According to the literature, audience agency has been constantly challenging the concept of unidirectional dominance of the West when audiences interpret foreign material in accordance with their own value systems. Early theoretical propositions suggested a unidirectional relationship between Western media dominance and the perceptions and values formed in the minds of Southern Hemisphere audiences; they also noted a predisposition toward American cultural products (Banjo & Umunna, 2022). In turn, modern literature reviews focus on the active audience model, where audiences are regarded as active interpreters rather than passive receivers of media content (Abubakar, 2013). This shift reveals the connection between global production and local decoding, and the encoding-decoding model becomes a tool for examining transnational content (Chopra & Gajjala, 2012).

Literature reviews are often characterized by a constant conflict between the impact of Western media on audience members' beliefs and selective belief. For example, one article conducted in Nigeria shows that American media does influence people's perceptions there (Banjo & Umunna, 2022). However, other sources show that information selection is a selective process, and Western media, including the BBC, is considered biased despite its credibility (Abubakar, 2013). The extent of the impact is debated; some sources assume that, due to the concept of banal cosmopolitanism, the impact of global media may surpass national boundaries (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009), while others claim that cultural specificity is a major barrier.

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A deeper analysis shows that although the field has moved away from the assumption that media power is one-sided, a theory that reflects today's reality has not yet been developed (Athique, 2014). In particular, a major gap between traditional concepts and current trends is the shift from reception theories to new forms of interaction in the digital era. Therefore, the literature review focuses on bridging this gap by reconsidering the perspective. In particular, exploring this shift is essential for this review because it allows a reconsideration of the transnational perspective in the context of today's digital media.

Theme 2: Cultural Dimensions and the Mechanism of Glocalization

The literature shows that adapting media content to local conditions helps overcome cultural discounting that occurs because unfamiliar cultural symbols and meanings lower the perceived value of the content. The glocalization strategy in entertainment has thus become a critical means of managing cultural differences in the industry by adapting global formats to local sociocultural context. For instance, adapting Western TV formats for Asian viewers enables the inclusion of familiar cultural features in the plot while preserving its fundamental structure and appeal. Audience reactions to adapted media content are usually evaluated using Hofstede's cultural dimensions, including individualism and collectivism. These cultural attributes could influence audiences' perceptions of foreign films and TV dramas.

The comparative analysis of the studies suggests that the cultural dimensions may facilitate or inhibit intercultural communication. Some research findings suggest that certain cultural attributes contribute to greater receptivity to foreign media, while other cultural dimensions contribute to misperceptions of the media's messages. A distinctive feature of the media consumption process is a transnational repertoire of evaluation. International fans of movies such as The Lord of the Rings use similar criteria in the assessment process, which seems to transcend national borders (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009). However, this finding conflicts with the "cultural discount" phenomenon identified in the reception of Asian cinema, including Chinese films with culturally unique features that are hard for the international audience to comprehend.

The main limitation in this area of research is the inequality of sectoral evidentiary base. There is ample information on Western-to-local glocalization, but less data on adaptations of non-Western media exports for global audiences (Fu & Wang, 2025). This review shows that glocalization is more than just a marketing strategy; it is a complex process of identity negotiation. Studying this process will reveal how producers manage to overcome stereotypes and achieve mutual understanding. Overall, the conclusion is that glocalization is a key link between the global screen and local meaning.

Theme 3: Digital Platforms and the Transformation of Audience Engagement

The literature points out that digital streaming architecture relates to audience agency through algorithmic recommendations, rules, and platform policies that define the types of access and interactions audiences have with the material. In addition, new technologies and social media have affected audience reception by enabling more real-time and transnational interactions. YouTube and other streaming platforms have become spaces where people from different cultures can exchange ideas and views, increase their intercultural literacy and understand (Diehl & Prins, 2008). Nevertheless, audience reception is influenced not only by video content but also by how these platforms are governed and regulated (Fu & Wang, 2025).

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Opinions conflict about whether this technology has opened avenues for cultural exchange or created new forms of digital segregation. Some research suggests that social media may increase intercultural contact and decrease prejudice toward other cultures (Diehl & Prins, 2008). Nevertheless, the problem still exists in the form of language barriers and discrimination in digital technologies. Platform governance issues that prevent effective communication, in addition to the language problem, become clear in the example of C-dramas and other non-Western products and how they are distributed across borders. Thus, technology can be both enabling and inhibitory, creating more opportunities for increased visibility of non-Western culture (Fu & Wang, 2025).

One of the most important aspects of technology as a mediator of cultural exchange is the lack of information, given its rapid development and the absence of longitudinal studies. The process is well researched, but the reasons it influences global cultural identity are not. Thus, this theme becomes an essential aspect of the review and underscores the need to study how digital technologies help overcome cultural differences while adding new regulatory issues.

Theme 4: Diasporic Communities and Urban Intercultural Interactions

Indeed, from the analysis of the existing literature, it becomes clear that diasporic audiences may use transnational media for something other than having fun. Consuming transnational media may help diasporic audiences preserve their links to their culture and adapt to life in a new country. Hence, multicultural urban areas represent a good setting for studying the intersections of nationality, ethnicity, and media consumption. Transnational media consumption may serve as a means of maintaining cultural identity and as a way for diasporic audiences to understand and interact with their surrounding social environment (Smets, 2013). Research on the experiences of Turkish and Moroccan film audiences in Europe is a good example of how ethnographic study of media can help us understand diasporic audiences' experiences with multiple cultural identities (Murphy & Kraidy, 2004; Smets, 2013). Media may become both a means of maintaining links with the homeland and a tool for creating a cosmopolitan identity.

Scholars agree on the usefulness of studying media use in the context of diaspora for audience studies, though interaction patterns differ significantly depending on social and contextual factors (Smets, 2013). Some scholars point out that virtual environments may contribute to unusual intercultural interactions among users, including the development of cultural awareness and literacy (Diehl & Prins, 2008). Other scholars draw attention to the phenomenon of "selective believability," meaning that diasporic audiences tend to be suspicious of media narratives about their new host countries, just as they used to be suspicious of media in their home countries (Abubakar, 2013). This proves that diasporic audiences cannot be considered a homogeneous group since their media consumption depends on the peculiarities of their social, cultural, and urban environment.

Further analysis of the literature suggests that too little attention is paid to the socio-political dimension of diasporic media use. While some researchers study diasporic audiences' interpretations of media or their emotional responses to it, they pay too little attention to the sociopolitical setting of these interactions. More research is needed on the relationship between diasporic media consumption and issues such as migration policies, social integration, and belonging. This approach supports the purpose of this literature review by showing that

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transnational media consumption is closely tied to the processes of negotiating identity in today's globalized world.

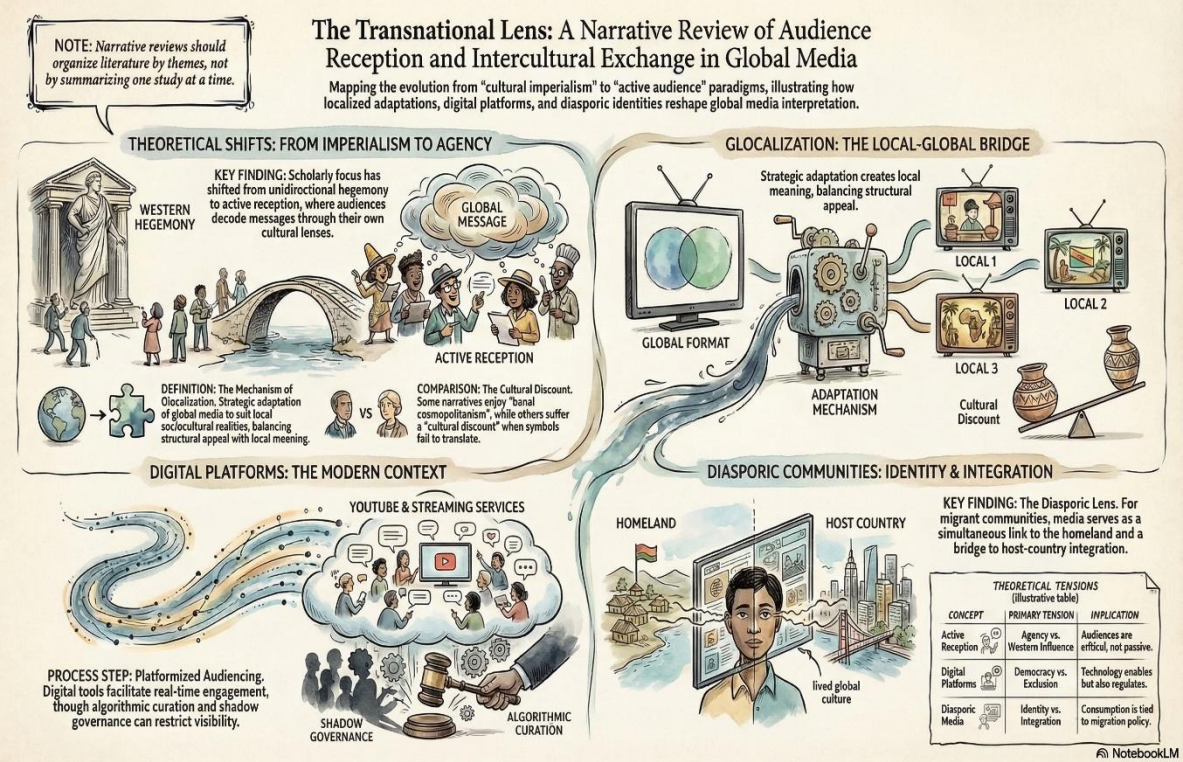


Figure 1: Thematic Literature

Critical Discussion

The following discussion goes beyond a descriptive review of the extant literature. The literature review will be analyzed through four interlinked analytical aspects to understand where scholars agree and disagree regarding the state of transnational media research and the tensions that persist in shaping audience studies (Athique, 2014; Hill, 2018). The analysis will begin by examining the main areas of agreement to better understand media reception theory, before moving to areas of disagreement to show emerging changes in how audience-media interaction is perceived. This will be followed by an exploration of the shortcomings in the literature, with emphasis on the lack of focus on non-Western contraflows and long-term consequences of transnational media consumption. Lastly, the discussion will touch on the implications of these results for media practitioners, platform governance, and intercultural communication policy.

Agreements in the Literature

Most of the literature concurs that the current state of global media is changing from a paradigm of passive consumption to more proactive and diverse audience participation. Across different geographical locations, scholars have shown that audiences do not passively consume transnational media content but actively interpret and decode it, drawing on their own cultural knowledge alongside global media narratives (Abubakar, 2013; Hill, 2018). The encoding-decoding concept helps explain how audiences in various locations, from Northern Nigeria to

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Western Europe, choose to believe selectively and participate critically in the media consumption process (Abubakar, 2013; Banjo & Umunna, 2022). The literature has also expanded to consider the role digital platforms play in fostering intercultural communication. Using such platforms, audiences can not only engage with media content but also interact with other people across borders (Fu & Wang, 2025).

This broad consensus indicates a significant departure from older, simpler theories of cultural imperialism. Theoretically, it underpins the concept of hybridity, according to which the global and the local do not have to contradict each other and instead can interact and influence one another. Practically, this means that distributing media content globally based on standardized practices is becoming increasingly inadequate. Media producers need to consider how different cultures perceive and respond to alien symbolism and meaning.

Disagreements

While there is a broad recognition of the importance of audiences in shaping global media, it remains unclear from the literature whether global media can promote banal cosmopolitanism. First, some researchers argue that consuming global texts, such as blockbuster franchises, contributes to the formation of a shared repertoire of references that allows audiences to evaluate the quality of media products and makes cultural differences less important (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009). Second, the problem of cultural discount persists, as some scholars argue that cultural and linguistic differences impede comprehension of media content (Fleury-Bahi, 2015). Similar inconsistencies also appear in the literature on technology use. While some perceive virtual spaces as places to learn about each other, others argue that cultural divides may be reproduced through platform governance and algorithmic processes (Fu & Wang, 2025). Overall, these inconsistencies show that global media allow cross-cultural communication, but cultural and technological barriers also impede it.

These inconsistencies show the problematic nature of the term "transnational lens". The inconsistency between universalism and cultural specificity implies that the impact of global media depends greatly on both the nature of the content and the cultural distance between producers and audiences. For a researcher, this inconsistency raises the problem of measuring cultural distance, which makes comparing results across different cultural contexts difficult. For media producers, it means considering both universalist appeal and cultural specificity.

Gaps

The most evident gaps identified in the literature are the unequal attention given to different media sectors and geographical regions. Research in this area is mainly concentrated on media exports from Western countries; however, it pays too little attention to the globalization of media from other parts of the world. For example, empirical data on the reception of media exports from China and India among audiences in the Global North remain limited (Fu & Wang, 2025). Moreover, longitudinal studies exploring how long-term exposure to transnational media influences the identity formation of younger generations remain scarce. Currently, most existing literature focuses on audience responses at a single point in time, providing short-term "snapshots" of the reception process rather than studying the cumulative effect of exposure to global platform media on people's cultural identity (Athique, 2014).

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These gaps in the literature indicate that current theoretical models cannot adequately accommodate changes in digital media mobility. Moreover, the limited involvement of socio-political aspects, such as migration policies or digital platform regulations, in reception studies has led to the predominance of semiotic and ethnographic approaches in the field (Smets, 2013). From a theoretical perspective, this approach leaves out the power structures associated with digital platform infrastructure, as researchers can understand how audiences use media but not the extent to which digital platforms themselves direct this process. Resolving these problems will help build a transnational media theory framework that reflects the new technology and social context of media production and consumption.

Implications

These findings have significant implications for the future of intercultural communication and media policy. The literature reviewed suggests that policymakers and educators should recognize that media consumption in both virtual and diasporic spaces contribute to the development of intercultural literacy and reduces apprehension toward cultural differences (Diehl & Prins, 2008). This finding is particularly useful for viewing digital media through the lenses of economic and technological space as well as cultural space. Appropriate policies and guidelines are necessary so that digital platforms' practices do not further marginalize minorities or allow less diverse cultural narratives to dominate (Fu & Wang, 2025). The increasing interaction between local and global media content suggests that promoting cultural diversity should not be limited to restricting foreign media content. Instead, local creators should be encouraged to become more involved in the global media market.

For media practitioners, the importance of the active audience is also an important issue to consider. As audiences increasingly consume content in real time on digital media platforms, transnational media production requires going beyond translation and thinking about how to make content interpretable, shareable, and adaptable to other cultural contexts (Fu & Wang, 2025). This implies creating content that can be interpreted in various ways, rather than trying to control one specific interpretation. In this way, local audiences can use their cultural experiences to create meaning in media content. Overall, in the era of media streaming, a transnational perspective becomes increasingly important.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Recommendations for Practice

For media practitioners and content creators working in global media markets, it is vital to move beyond the cultural imperialism view of global audiences and adopt a perspective that emphasizes the audience's proactive role. Translation or subtitles do not necessarily make content relevant to audiences in different cultures. Producers must consider how to localize the story, characters, values, and cultural references to keep the content relevant. In this respect, glocalization entails more than language adaptation, since producers must understand how local audiences interpret and relate to the ideas presented in global media content. Producers must rewrite the story so global ideas make sense in the local context. In terms of industry practices, the following should be considered:

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- Industry Localization Practices (Media Producers): Content creators have to work with cultural intermediaries from local contexts, including local consultants and writers, during the pre-production process to adapt the narrative.
- Participatory Audience: Content creators and distributors have to provide interactive digital platforms for global audiences to contribute in participatory spaces.

This not only promotes intercultural literacy but also gives audiences in geographically dispersed locations a sense of belonging to the same transnational media community (Diehl & Prins, 2008).

Recommendations for Policy or Organizational Use

From an organizational and policy perspective, there is an urgent need for governance structures that regulate digital streaming and social media sites not as purely economic institutions but as spaces of cultural interaction. Such governance should extend beyond any form of general supervision and focus on two different forms of regulation:

- Platform Governance (Digital Platforms): Digital streaming sites should develop their algorithms and recommendation engines to avoid the formation of content silos and make sure that non-Western content streams get equal visibility.
- Content Regulation Policy (Policy Makers): National media authorities should abandon prohibitive forms of censorship and adopt more supportive forms of co-production quotas that will facilitate cross-border media production.

To minimize social fears and increase mutual understanding, organizations should provide structured opportunities for cross-cultural communication and cooperation—global film festivals on digital streaming platforms, joint projects by young filmmakers, etc. Of course, these initiatives should be accompanied by proper privacy and ethics policies.

Future Research Directions

Future research needs to go beyond snapshots of transnational media reception by applying longitudinal and comparative methods. It is essential to investigate the effects of constant digital media consumption on identity, especially among young consumers (Banjo & Umunna, 2022). Comparative investigations into "South-to-South" and "East-to-West" media flows are also important, as they may help explain how media content produced in China, India, and other non-Western countries is perceived globally (Fu & Wang, 2025). In addition, the role of algorithms and platform governance in cultural visibility and audience engagement needs to be considered (Athique, 2014; Hill, 2018).

Conclusion

First, transnational media cannot be understood as a process of adapting certain meanings with a fixed character when they become part of global media; rather, global media outcomes result from interactions among global media production, local culture, and audience consumption. Hence, cultural hybridity and glocalization play a key role in explaining media adaptation. Moreover, the development of digital spaces provides new opportunities for adaptation and interpretation of foreign media content because digital platforms enable audiences to consume

and interact with foreign content, producers, and audiences beyond geographical boundaries. The development of virtual and diasporic spaces could provide opportunities for intercultural interaction and the negotiation of audience identity within the framework of transnational media.

Furthermore, this review has combined multiple aspects that are studied separately, including audience studies, digital platforms, cultural dimensions, and transnational media flows. Combining these fields helps explain not only the processes of media movement from one country to another but also audience reception of media content. Cultural distance plays an important role, but its effects may differ across audiences in different countries. Therefore, studying transnational media requires accounting for local experiences, digital platforms, and how audiences consume global media content. Overall, the review summarizes the evolution of the field of transnational media, emphasizing the significant shift from historical models of cultural imperialism to the more advanced concept of the "active audience".

In the future, the global media environment will continue to change as algorithms and decentralized media production and distribution emerge. Consequently, the transnational perspective needs to evolve to consider intercultural communication in the context of digital platforms. The era of streaming media offers great opportunities to connect people from different countries. However, it also depends on the platform's inclusiveness and how well it reflects the content's cultural context. Despite cultural differences and barriers, transnational media could contribute to intercultural understanding.

Limitations

Although the review followed a thematic methodology for organizing the findings, several constraints should be noted. First, the review used only one database, namely Scopus. Although Scopus is known for its extensive coverage of academic resources, limiting the study to one database could have excluded relevant literature, especially regional or non-Western studies found via Web of Science, JSTOR, and regional databases. Second, the time frame from 2004 to 2025 may have missed theories and grey literature on new technologies from earlier periods and in the most recent period. In addition, findings were unevenly distributed because the review placed more emphasis on Western-to-local rather than non-Western contraflows, even though C-dramas were covered in the literature. Overlapping concepts such as transnationalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism also made thematic classification difficult. Lastly, being an integrative review, there was a certain degree of subjectivity in selecting and interpreting the themes.

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