



IDENTITY NEGOTIATION: AMERICAN AND INDONESIAN CULTURAL HYBRIDITY IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Nawangsih Edynna Putri¹, Arie Restama², Nathaniel Nicolas Ryan³

^{1,2,3}Hospitality Study Program, Politeknik Indonusa Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: ¹nawangsih.edynna@poltekindonusa.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Globalization allows the rapid spread of American popular culture, including the Halloween celebration, to various countries, including Indonesia. Halloween is no longer represented as an authentic American culture as it adapts to Indonesian local culture. This research aims to reveal the cultural hybridity representations in Javanese traditional Halloween events organized by hotels in Indonesia and analyze the cultural hybridity formulations. This research employed a qualitative method, using Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity. Data were collected through a literature study and documentation, such as footage of Halloween celebrations at hotels in Indonesia. The findings reveal that Halloween events at hotels in Indonesia embody three main concepts of Bhabha's cultural hybridity, encompassing Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence. Third Space is represented in the formulation of a new cultural product, a Javanese-themed Halloween, combining Indonesian and American cultural narrations, symbols, and aesthetics. Mimicry is reflected in partial imitation of American Halloween and cultural adaptations, presenting Javanese mystics as the main identity. Ambivalence is portrayed in the hotel's strategy to adopt global trends and how the hotel industry maintains the local cultural identity as the differentiator. Halloween events organized by hotels in Indonesia are a practical cultural production, highlighting the ability of the hospitality industry to negotiate global and local cultures in forming a contextual hybrid cultural identity and to strengthen destination difference in the hospitality industry

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Corresponding Author:

Nawangsih Edynna Putri

Hospitality Study Program, Politeknik Indonusa Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: nawangsih.edynna@poltekindonusa.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

American popular culture has had a massive influence across the globe. As Storey states, popular culture is a culture that is widely enjoyed by many people [1]. Many popular American products have successfully captured the interest of people around the world, such as films, music, celebrations, literature, and even lifestyles. The most obvious examples encountered in daily life include McDonald's, Starbucks, KFC, and other fast-food franchises. In fact, fast-food franchises have sparked a cultural transformation through the adaptation and blending of local and global values via menu items within the concepts of innovation, diffusion, and cultural hybridity [2]. The spread of American culture is inseparable from the globalization process, which enables the global movement of people. This process of human migration has led to the emergence of multicultural nations. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse has pointed out, the concept of multiculturalism helps promote cultural hybridity—the blending of cultures, races, languages, and identities [3]. It is no wonder that today we frequently encounter a blend of American cultural values and local cultures, such as the adaptation of American franchise menus to local tastes.

The hegemony of American popular culture is evident not only in the phenomenon of fast food but also in popular

celebrations such as Halloween. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Halloween is a Celtic tradition that was brought to America and is now celebrated every October 31 with a horror theme. Halloween has even become a national holiday in America [4]. The popularity of Halloween continues to rise due to the high interest of people outside the U.S. in participating in Halloween celebrations, such as in Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia. As reported in Japan Web Magazine, Halloween in Japan is celebrated by the general public through street festivals, the tourism industry, such as Disneyland, Universal Studios, and Fuji-Q Highland, by offering horror-themed rides, as well as by companies selling Halloween-themed products [5]. Meanwhile, in Saudi Arabia, the Tehran Times reported that Halloween is celebrated in the form of festivals where people combine traditional Saudi Arabian costumes with typical Halloween costumes, such as terrifying masks [6]. These phenomena indicate a blending of cultural values between American culture and local culture.

In Indonesia, Halloween is celebrated in various ways, such as costume parties, haunted houses, and Halloween-themed decorations in shopping malls, cafes, and hotels. Some hotels even offer special packages or events to celebrate Halloween. For example, Alana Hotel Solo held a Halloween party in October 2022 with the theme “Lingsir Wengi” which incorporated local traditions. This enthusiasm is worth studying because Halloween—which is essentially a foreign culture—is celebrated by the local community. From this issue arises the research question on what patterns or approaches to these celebrations ensure the local community accepts them.

A previous study on cultural hybridity between the United States and Indonesia is titled “The Local-Global Innovation of an Indonesian TOEFL-like Game: A Cultural Hybridity Model” [7]. This study analyzed how game innovation successfully met players’ needs in understanding English. The study employed the Technology Acceptance Model questionnaire as its method. The results indicated that applying strategies that combine local and American cultural hybridity to create game animations effectively helped players understand English in a fun and innovative way. This study shares a common topic with the aforementioned research, namely the concept of cultural hybridity between American (global) and Indonesian (local) cultures. The distinguishing aspects lie in the cultural products under examination and the methods employed, as this study examines Halloween cultural products using a literature review.

Another relevant study is titled “Halloween and Valentine’s Day in Slovakia: New Holidays or New Opportunities for Celebration?” by Katarína Popelková and Juraj Zajonc. The study examines the transformation of Halloween and Valentine’s Day celebrations in Slovakia, which have become public holidays. It formulates ethnological findings and identifies the transformation of these celebrations along with changes in holiday practices through Gebhardt’s theory of “eventisation”. The results show that Halloween and Valentine’s Day celebrations in Slovakia now increasingly embody the concept of urban festivals and cultural entertainment events packaged for commercial purposes, involving religious sites [8]. This study shares the same subject of study as that research, namely Halloween celebrations. The distinguishing aspect lies in the approach and theory, as this study is examined using the Transnational American Studies approach and Homi Bhabha’s theory of cultural hybridity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted within the discipline of American Studies using a transnational approach. According to Fishkin, as cited in Docherty, transnationalism is the process of creating sustainable cross-national ties in terms of kinship, culture, language, and the economy [9]. In this context, when discussing American culture, it is closely linked to other countries, given that American culture has spread throughout the world. This process of cultural encounter gives rise to the concept of hybridity. Hybridity, according to Bhabha as cited in Shamshad and Hashmi, is characterized by the fusion of two cultures that produces a new culture or tradition [10]. The theory of cultural hybridity is used to analyze the Halloween celebration formula at the hotel. The analysis is drawn from several videos, images, and footage of Halloween celebrations.

This study was conducted using qualitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln, as cited in Aspers & Corte, state that qualitative research emphasizes the collection of empirical data, such as observations, life stories, visual texts, case studies, interviews, and so on [11]. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative methods are not measured in terms of quantity. This method does not examine the processing of numerical data but focuses on non-numerical data such as documents. In line with this, Cresswell in McNabb indicates that qualitative research requires researchers to collect data through document analysis [12]. This method does not rely on a single data source but requires multiple sources or documents to be reviewed and grouped into specific categories.

a. Data Collecting Method

This study employed a literature review as its data collection method. Primary data was collected from documentation of Halloween events celebrated by several hotels in Solo City, in the form of photos and videos. Primary data collection was conducted using the Simak methods, particularly in the Simak Bebas Libat Cakap technique. According to Sudaryanto, this technique is implemented if the researcher is not directly engaged in data formation and

presentation [13]. Meanwhile, secondary data were collected through a literature review to support the analysis, such as references from journal articles, books, mass media articles, news reports, and other electronic sources.

b. Method of Analysis

Miles-Huberman's qualitative data analysis methodologies were employed in the analytical process. According to Miles-Huberman in [14], there are multiple phases or courses in qualitative analysis, including data gathering, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. First, the primary data consisting of videos and photos were reviewed and analyzed based on the theoretical framework. The next step was to identify the respective American and Indonesian cultural values present in the footage of the Halloween celebrations at several hotels. Following this identification process, the analysis continued by determining the aspects of cultural hybridity contained within the Halloween celebrations at hotels based on Bhabha's theory of Hybridity. The representations of cultural hybridity are categorized in 3 main aspects, including the concept of Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence. This analysis aimed to define the formula of Halloween celebrations organized by hotel management.

Third Space concept defines the intersection of two cultures that emerges as a new space without the domination of either culture. This new space allows negotiating cultural identity, reshaping cultural meaning, and developing flexible identity. Practical implementation of Third Space concept in hospitality culture can be seen in hotel management policy of using Western standardized service, including English language usage for service. In Indonesia, the use of English language in the hospitality industry keeps developing, not limited to customer excellence, but also for marketing purposes such as English for social media copywriting [15]. However, Third Space does not allow one culture to dominate another culture; it creates a new hybrid culture.

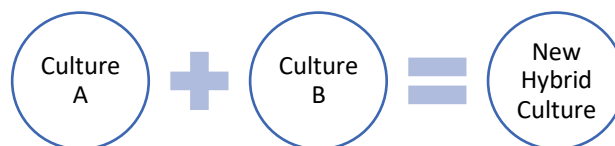


Figure 1. Third Space Illustration in Cultural Hybridity

The second concept of cultural hybridity is mimicry. Mimicry is closely associated with colonial discourse, where the colonized party has a strong tendency to imitate the colonizer's culture. However, this mimicry process is incomplete. Bhabha defines this condition as "almost the same, but not quite" [16]. It means that the local colonized group adopts the aspects of the dominant culture, but it still maintains its own culture. In other words, mimicry creates a hybrid cultural form without an identical copy. The third concept of cultural hybridity is ambivalence. Ambivalence refers to the opposite intercultural relations. In colonial discourse, ambivalence enables both acceptance and rejection of colonial culture at the same time [17]. Ambivalence is a part of reforming hybrid cultural identity. Practical implementation can be seen when local groups consume global culture, but they still preserve their cultural roots.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Homi Bhabha defines cultural hybridity as the process of interaction between two or more cultures, formulating new cultural practices with new identities and meanings. It occurs in the Third Space, where cultural negotiation constructs new forms that are not completely derived from any one particular culture. In the hospitality industry context, cultural hybridity explains how hotel management integrates local Indonesian cultural values with global service standards, English language proficiency, for instance, into daily work practices. Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween event organized by The Alana Hotel & Convention Center Solo is a particularly compelling example of how global and local cultures negotiate to produce new cultural forms. Instead of fully embracing American Halloween, the event incorporates Javanese cultural narrations, symbols, and aesthetics. Halloween, originating from American traditions, is reimagined by exposing local ghost figures such as the pocong and kuntilanak and by using the "Lingsir Wengi" theme song, which is deeply rooted in the mystical imagination of Javanese society.

3.1. Negotiating New Cultural Product through Third Space

Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween party held by The Alana Hotel & Convention Solo embodies the cultural blending of American and Indonesian cultures. In Bhabha's hybridity concept, this phenomenon occurs in the Third Space. Third Space allows two or more cultures to integrate through a negotiation process, which creates a new cultural meaning [18]. At the Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween party, here are several key points resulting from Third Space.

Table 1. New Cultural Representation in Third Space

Cultural Aspect	American Culture	Indonesian Culture
Theme	Halloween	Lingsir Wengi
Attribute	Western monsters	Local Ghosts
Symbol	Modern Horror Decorations	Traditional Javanese Mystics
Types	Party	Local Cultural Performance

The result is neither a purely Western Halloween nor a traditional Javanese cultural ritual. What has emerged is a hybrid cultural product: a Javanese-style Halloween. This is the area that Bhabha refers to as the “Third Space”. The Javanese-style Halloween is not considered pure Western tradition, and it cannot be categorized as traditional Javanese ritual either. This occurs because the context, purpose, and pattern of the celebration have been transformed. The intersection of the two different cultural systems creates a new cultural form containing cultural elements from each. However, this transformation is not totally identical to the original cultures. The identical Halloween symbols, for instance, the ghost costumes, pumpkin decorations, and mystical nuances, are combined with the local narratives, Javanese spiritual figures, and aesthetic Javanese cultures, which are close to local people’s experiences and imaginations. The process allows Halloween to be reproduced, negotiated, and reconstructed based on local socio-cultural context. This phenomenon is defined through Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity. According to Bhabha, the process of the intersection of two cultures is neither an adoption nor a rejection of another culture [19]. This process is defined as a negotiation of cultural meaning that emerges the new identical and cultural practices. In Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween concept, a cultural blending occurs, particularly in symbolic aspects between American popular culture and Javanese cultural heritage. The final result is not one culture’s domination over another culture, but a representation of unique and contextual culture. Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration portrays a Halloween with a touch of Javanese taste. Halloween with Javanese taste is a hybrid cultural product and has the potential to be a global attraction, featuring a local nuance that is relevant to Indonesian people.



Figure 2. Third Space Concept Embodied in Javanese-style Halloween

This negotiation space, as defined by Bhabha, is called Third Space. Third Space is a symbolic space for identity, meaning, and cultural representation reformed through cross-cultural interactions. In this space, the borders between American culture and Javanese culture become blurred. Hence, it allows the emergence of new cultural forms that are unable to be totally claimed by one party. Halloween party with a Javanese concept portrays that culture is not a static entity, but dynamic, progressive, and open for reinterpretation. Therefore, the existence of Third Space in Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration forms an attractive cultural innovation for Hospitality industry. Furthermore, it depicts how globalization is aligned with local identity preservation through creative and sustainable hybridity.

3.2. Redefining New Culture through Mimicry

Mimicry occurs when a local culture intersects with a global, in this context dominant, culture. The concept enables an incomplete imitation, or partial adaptation [20]. In the case of Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween party, it adopts a selective and contextual imitation. It not only imitates American Halloween culture but also reproduces and modifies new cultural representations. Therefore, the final result of mimicry is not completely the same, or in Bhabha’s definition, it is called “almost the same, but not quite”. This condition is obviously depicted in that celebration. Hospitality is a global-oriented industry, so it is definitely possible to adopt several global trends to attract more customers. Halloween is one of the global trends celebrated in several hemispheres. Following global trends with certain customizations is a part of contextual imitation. This contextual imitation is portrayed in reproduced American Halloween, featuring local elements. The common American Halloween symbols and attributes, such as zombies,

vampires, monsters, Jack O'Lantern, and pumpkins, are not mainly featured. Alternatively, Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween party reconstructs the American Halloween experience through symbols that are closer to local culture, depicted in Javanese ghosts, mystical narration, and urban legends. Lingsir Wengi is a Javanese traditional song, closely associated with mystical nuances. This transformation shows that the hotel not only imports global culture, but also adjusts to the local cultural context. Hence, the meaning of Halloween has undergone a localized process to be more accepted and understood by Indonesian people.



Figure 3. Representations of Indonesian Halloween Symbols

The analysis emphasizes that mimicry is not defined as a compromise of local culture toward global culture, but a cultural negotiation strategy. The hotel industry still maintains Halloween's root identity to fulfill global expectations or international hospitality trends. However, the hotel industry also features Javanese root identity through the selection of narration, icons, and local aesthetics. As a consequence, it creates a cultural representation bridging two traditions, as it is still recognized as Western Halloween, but it has distinguished characteristics. Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration organized by The Alana Hotel & Convention Center Solo reflects mimicry characteristics as stated by Bhabha: an imitative form with differences. This Halloween is not recognized as an authentic copy of Western culture, but an interpretation reformed by Javanese cultural values, symbols, and narrations. This condition emphasizes that local culture is an agent in redefining global influence in light of its own context. Hence, Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration is defined as a mimicry form as it is portrayed as "almost the same, but not quite". In other words, it is incompletely the same as American Halloween, as it gains a new identity through the adaptation process toward local culture.

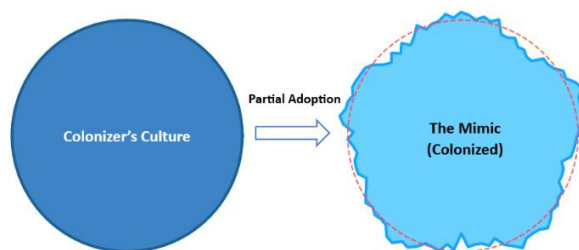


Figure 4. Micro Gaps between Colonizer's Culture and Mimic Culture

3.3. Compromising New Cultural Acceptance and Rejection through Ambivalence

Ambivalence in cultural hybridity reflects the condition where intercultural relations between global and local culture are neither accepted nor rejected. This concept shows dual responses towards the external culture, in which people admire, adopt, and modify that culture based on their interest and identity. The intersection of two cultures creates cultural tension, as the local culture is positioned to continue negotiating its identity amid global cultural influence. Consequently, ambivalence emerges as an inseparable character of the cultural hybridity process. This condition is portrayed in Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration organized by The Alana Hotel & Convention Center Solo. The hotel embraces global popular culture by adopting Halloween as the main theme of its event. This decision is being considered because Halloween has become part of global tourism/hospitality trends, attracting more tourists, particularly young tourists who are familiar with global popular culture through digital media. By bringing a Halloween theme, the hotel attempts to present a modern experience, follow market trends, and increase

competitiveness in the hospitality industry. On the other hand, the hotel does not completely embrace American Halloween representations. Instead of fully adopting the American Halloween concept, the hotel maintains local culture's identity by highlighting Javanese mystical narration as the main elements of the event concept. Those Javanese mystical representations encompass local ghost figures, folklore inspired by urban legends, and the use of Lingsir Wengi song to convey authentic Javanese mysticism. Those local elements do not remain as supplemental decorations, but are the identity to differ from conventional American Halloween.



Figure 5. Adoption of American Halloween Symbols in Jack O'Lantern & Witch Figures

The coexistence of two tendencies reflects an ambivalent concept. The hotel accepts the global culture, considering its economic benefits, commercial attractiveness, and relevance in tourist industry trends. On the other side, the hotel also embraces transformation toward that global culture to align with local identity. In other words, that global culture is not passively accepted, but is negotiated through selection, adjustment, and reinterpretation processes based on the socio-cultural context of Indonesian people. Hence, Lingsir Wengi-themed Halloween celebration organized by The Alana Hotel & Convention Center Solo reflects that the relationship between globalization and local culture is neither the dichotomic acceptance nor rejection. On the contrary, both are negotiating with each other to create a new culture, containing global and local cultural elements. This "accept and modify at the same time" idea emerges as the core of ambivalence. This ambivalence emphasizes that the local cultural identity still has its own space to actively take a part in changing global influence. Hence, the new culture is not only reproducing American culture, but also a new representation based on cultural, social, and commercial context in the hotel environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Halloween celebration at the hotel is not simply an adoption of American culture, but a cultural negotiation process that creates new representations. Through a cultural hybridity perspective, the Halloween celebration organized by the hotel in Indonesia, particularly in Java, features how global and local cultural elements interact with each other to reform a contextual cultural identity. Third Space emerges as a new meaning of the production room, where Halloween symbols are interpreted through Javanese narrations, values, and cultural aesthetics. During this process, mimicry does not reproduce the complete American culture, but it creates a new representation form that maintains the original Halloween characteristics and also presents local identity as a differentiator. On the other side, ambivalence is reflected in the hotel's strategy to simultaneously accommodate global market trends and maintain local cultural legacy. This condition shows that local culture is not positioned as subordinate, but it has agency to select, modify, and reconstruct the global culture's influence based on socio-cultural and commercial context. Therefore, cultural hybridity reflected in the Indonesian Halloween celebration is not a local-based marketing strategy, but a cultural production practice which actively forms new identity through a continuing negotiation process. The findings theoretically enhance the application of cultural hybridity in the hospitality industry by portraying that the hotel in Indonesia emerges as a cultural bridge between globalization and local identity. Theoretically, this research enriches cultural hybridity studies in the tourism/hospitality industry in Indonesia. Practically, the research findings indicate that the integration of local culture in international-themed events becomes the strategy to increase tourist destinations' differentiation. Furthermore, this strategy is potential to strengthen the representation of local cultural identity within the dynamic globalization.



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