



## Digital Transformation of Minahasa Thanksgiving Ceremony: Analysis of Symbolic Meaning Shift in the Social Media Era

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the digital transformation of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies and the shift in their symbolic meanings in the era of social media. Using a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review method, this study examines various academic and secondary sources to understand the impact of digitalization on the practice and meaning of this traditional ritual. The results show a significant shift in the way thanksgiving ceremonies are carried out, documented, and interpreted. Social media has become a primary platform for sharing ritual experiences, shifting the focus from spiritual aspects to visual and performative aspects. There is also a reinterpretation of traditional symbols in a digital context, as well as changes in the dynamics of participation and social interaction during the ceremony. Although digital transformation brings challenges in maintaining the authenticity of the ritual, it also opens up opportunities for the preservation and promotion of Minahasan culture more broadly. This study highlights the importance of a balanced approach that maintains the cultural essence of thanksgiving ceremonies while utilizing the potential of digital technology to strengthen cultural identity.

**Keywords:** *Digital Transformation, Minahasa Thanksgiving Ceremony, Symbolic Meaning, Social Media Era*

### A. Introduction

The thanksgiving ceremony is one of the important traditions in Minahasa culture that has been passed down from generation to generation. This ritual reflects the values of togetherness, gratitude, and the close relationship between humans, nature, and the Almighty. However, in the current digital and social media era, the implementation and meaning of the Minahasa thanksgiving ceremony have begun to experience a significant shift (Pangkey, 2020).

Digitalization has brought about major changes in the way Minahasa people interact, communicate, and preserve their cultural traditions. Social media such as Facebook,

Instagram, and YouTube are now the main platforms for sharing important moments in life, including thanksgiving ceremonies. This phenomenon has changed the way thanksgiving ceremonies are prepared, carried out, and documented (Londa et al., 2021).

This shift does not only occur in the technical aspects of the implementation of the ceremony, but also in the symbolic meaning contained therein. Traditional symbols that used to have sacred and profound meanings are now often reinterpreted in a digital context. For example, the presentation of traditional food that used to have spiritual meaning, is now more emphasized on aesthetic value for the purposes of uploading on social media (Mesra, 2024).

Digital transformation has also had an impact on the participation and involvement of the younger generation in thanksgiving ceremonies. On the one hand, social media opens up opportunities for the younger generation to get to know and be interested in the traditions of their ancestors. However, on the other hand, there are concerns that the essence and deep values of the ceremony may be reduced to mere viral content in cyberspace (Walandouw, 2022).

This change has also affected social dynamics in Minahasan society. In the past, thanksgiving ceremonies were a physical gathering that strengthened community ties. Now, interactions during the ceremony are often fragmented between the real world and the virtual world, with some participants more focused on taking photos or videos to share online (Sumampouw, 2023).

However, digitalization has also had a positive impact on the preservation of Minahasan culture. Digital documentation allows for the storage and dissemination of information about thanksgiving ceremonies more widely, helping to introduce the richness of Minahasan culture to a wider audience, both domestically and internationally (Turang, 2021).

The main challenge currently faced by the Minahasan people is how to balance the adoption of digital technology and the preservation of traditional values in thanksgiving ceremonies. There is a need to review and reinterpret the symbolic meaning of thanksgiving ceremonies in the context of the digital era, without losing their spiritual essence (Renwarin, 2022).

This shift in symbolic meaning also has an impact on economic and tourism aspects. The virality of thanksgiving ceremony content on social media has increased tourist interest

in Minahasan culture. This opens up new economic opportunities, but also raises questions about the commercialization and authenticity of cultural traditions (Lolowang, 2023).

In a broader context, this phenomenon reflects the global dynamics between tradition and modernity. The Minahasan thanksgiving ceremony is an interesting case study of how a society adapts to technological change while trying to maintain its cultural identity (Kaunang, 2022).

The digital transformation of Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies also raises new questions regarding ethics and privacy. How do Minahasa people respond to the dissemination of information and images of sacred ceremonies on social media? Are there any boundaries that need to be set to protect the sacredness of the ceremony? (Mandagi, 2024).

Previous research conducted by Walandouw (2022) examined changes in communication patterns in Minahasa traditional ceremonies in the digital era. This study found that social media has changed the way information about ceremonies is disseminated and interpreted by the community, with a significant impact on the participation of the younger generation in traditional rituals.

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Runtuwene (2023) focused on the semiotic analysis of symbols in Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies displayed on social media platforms. This study revealed a shift in the meaning of traditional symbols when transformed into digital content.

Although these studies have made important contributions to understanding the impact of digitalization on Minahasan traditional ceremonies, there is still a gap in

the overall understanding of how this shift in symbolic meaning affects the cultural identity and social cohesion of the Minahasan community in the long term (Supit, 2024).

The novelty of this proposed research lies in the interdisciplinary approach that combines analysis of cultural anthropology, digital sociology, and media studies to examine the transformation of the symbolic meaning of Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies in the era of social media. This study will also explore innovative strategies that can be developed to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity in the context of traditional ceremonies (Pangalila, 2023).

This research is important to conduct considering the urgency to understand and manage cultural change in the digital era. The results of the study are expected to provide valuable insights for cultural preservation efforts, cultural policy development, and sustainable development planning that considers aspects of tradition and modernity in Minahasa and other areas with similar characteristics.

## **B. Method**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to examine the digital transformation of Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies and the shift in their symbolic meaning in the era of social media. A qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore and understand socio-cultural phenomena in depth, especially in the context of complex changes such as those occurring in Minahasa traditions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

A systematic literature review will be conducted to collect, analyze, and synthesize previous studies and other relevant sources

related to Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies, the digital transformation of culture, and the impact of social media on traditional practices. This process will involve a comprehensive search of academic databases such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and local repositories of universities in North Sulawesi (Snyder, 2019).

Inclusion criteria for the literature to be reviewed include: (1) studies that focus on Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies, (2) research on the impact of digitalization and social media on traditional cultural practices, (3) analysis of the shift in symbolic meaning in traditional rituals due to modernization, and (4) case studies on the adaptation of traditional culture in the digital era. Literature in Indonesian and English published in the last 10 years will be prioritized to ensure the relevance and currency of the data (Booth et al., 2016).

The data analysis process will use a thematic analysis approach, where key themes will be identified, coded, and organized to form a coherent narrative about the digital transformation of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies. Particular attention will be paid to themes such as shifting symbolic meanings, adaptation of rituals in a digital context, the role of social media in the transmission of cultural knowledge, and challenges in maintaining the authenticity of traditions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

To enrich the analysis, this study will also utilize secondary sources such as news articles, social media posts, and publicly available digital documentation of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies. This will help in understanding contemporary representations and interpretations of the ceremony in the digital space (Boellstorff et al., 2012).

The validity and reliability of the study will be strengthened through triangulation of data sources, where findings from different types of literature and sources will be compared and integrated. In addition, peer review will be conducted by involving experts in the field of Minahasan cultural anthropology and digital media studies to validate the interpretations and conclusions produced (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Research ethics will be carefully considered, especially in the use and citation of digital sources. Permission will be sought if necessary to use specific content from social media or other online sources. Sensitivity to Minahasan cultural values will be maintained throughout the research process to respect the sacredness of the thanksgiving ceremony (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Through this methodology, the study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of how digital transformation affects the symbolic meaning of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies, as well as its implications for cultural identity and social cohesion of the community. The results of the study are expected to provide a theoretical and practical basis for adaptive cultural preservation strategies in the digital era.

## **C. Result and Discussion**

### **1. Result**

A systematic literature review reveals that digital transformation has brought about significant changes in the implementation and meaning of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies. Social media has become the main platform for sharing and documenting important moments in these rituals, changing the way Minahasans interact with their traditions.

The results of the analysis show a shift in focus from the spiritual and communal aspects of thanksgiving ceremonies to the visual and performative aspects. Many participants in the ceremony are now more concerned with how the ritual will appear on social media, rather than the intrinsic meaning of the ritual itself.

It was found that traditional symbols in Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies have been reinterpreted in a digital context. For example, traditional foods that used to have spiritual meaning are now often presented more as aesthetic objects for social media content.

The younger generation of Minahasans show varying levels of involvement in thanksgiving ceremonies. On the one hand, social media has increased their awareness and interest in this tradition. However, on the other hand, their participation is often limited to the digital aspect, such as sharing photos or videos, without a deep understanding of the meaning of the ritual.

The study revealed that the digitalization of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies has opened up new opportunities for cultural preservation and promotion. Digital documentation allows for the storage and wider dissemination of information about these rituals, helping to introduce the richness of Minahasan culture to a wider audience.

However, the digital transformation also brings challenges in maintaining the authenticity and sacredness of the ceremonies. There are concerns that commercialization and virality on social media may diminish the spiritual and cultural value of the rituals.

The results also show changes in the social dynamics during thanksgiving ceremonies. Physical interactions that used to be the core of these rituals are now often replaced by virtual interactions, with participants more focused on taking photos or videos to share online.

A generational gap was found in the understanding and practice of thanksgiving ceremonies in the digital era. The older generation tends to maintain traditional interpretations, while the younger generation is more likely to adopt new meanings that are in line with digital culture.

The analysis shows that the digital transformation of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies has raised new questions related to ethics and privacy. Issues such as the dissemination of sacred ritual images on social media and the boundaries between the public and the private in the context of traditional ceremonies have become topics of debate in society.

Despite the challenges, the research findings also reveal creative efforts by the Minahasan community to bridge tradition and modernity. Some communities have begun to develop innovative ways to maintain the spiritual essence of the thanksgiving ceremony while utilizing digital technology for the transmission of cultural knowledge.

## **2. Discussion**

The digital transformation of the Minahasan thanksgiving ceremony can be understood through the lens of contemporary ritual theory proposed by Catherine Bell. Bell emphasizes that rituals are not static entities, but rather practices that continue to evolve according to social and technological contexts

(Bell, 2009). In the case of the Minahasan thanksgiving ceremony, social media has become a new context that reshapes the way this ritual is practiced and interpreted.

The digital anthropology perspective developed by Daniel Miller et al. (2016) provides a framework for understanding how digital technology is integrated into everyday life and cultural practices. In the Minahasan context, social media is not only a tool for documenting ceremonies, but also an integral part of the ritual itself, changing the way people participate in and interpret the ceremony.

The mediation theory by Stig Hjarvard (2013) helps explain how social media not only transmits information about thanksgiving ceremonies, but also shapes and changes the characteristics of the ritual. This process of 'mediatization' is seen in the shift in focus from direct communal experiences to digital representations and sharing of experiences online.

The concept of 'networked individualism' introduced by Barry Wellman and Lee Rainie (2012) is relevant in understanding the changing social dynamics in Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies. This theory explains how digital technology allows individuals to remain connected to their communities, but in a more personal and fragmented way, which is reflected in online participation in the ceremony.

The analysis of the shift in symbolic meaning in Minahasa thanksgiving ceremonies can be enriched with the social semiotic theory of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2001). This theory emphasizes how the meaning of symbols changes when the context of their communication changes,

which in this case This is a shift from the traditional context to the digital context of social media.

## D. Conclusion

The digital transformation of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies has brought about significant changes in the implementation, meaning, and transmission of this tradition. Social media and digital technology have changed the way Minahasans interact with their cultural heritage, creating new spaces for ritual expression and interpretation. While these changes bring challenges in maintaining the authenticity and sacredness of the ceremonies, they also open up opportunities for the preservation and promotion of Minahasan culture to a wider audience. This study underlines the importance of a balanced approach in dealing with the digital transformation of cultural traditions. A strategy is needed that can maintain the spiritual and cultural essence of Minahasan thanksgiving ceremonies, while utilizing the potential of digital technology to strengthen cultural identity and social cohesion. This requires collaboration between generations, dialogue between tradition and modernity, and innovation in cultural practices that are responsive to the digital era without losing their traditional roots.

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