

# Representation of British Cuisine as Cultural Identity Through YouTube Content

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## Abstrak

Budaya merupakan sistem makna yang tercermin melalui praktik sosial dan produk material, termasuk kuliner yang merepresentasikan identitas suatu masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis representasi kuliner Inggris sebagai identitas budaya melalui konten YouTube. Metode yang digunakan adalah analisis isi kualitatif dengan memanfaatkan dua video YouTube dan beberapa artikel ilmiah sebagai sumber data. Data dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk representasi budaya, nilai sosial, serta peran media digital dalam membangun persepsi audiens terhadap budaya Inggris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kuliner Inggris, seperti teh, full English breakfast, dan makanan rumahan tradisional, digambarkan bukan sekadar konsumsi harian, melainkan simbol interaksi sosial, warisan budaya, dan identitas nasional. Selain itu, representasi visual dan pengalaman personal dalam video memperkuat ketertarikan audiens internasional terhadap budaya Inggris modern. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa YouTube berperan efektif dalam penyebaran, pembentukan, dan pemahaman identitas budaya di era digital. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa media digital tidak hanya menyampaikan informasi kuliner, tetapi juga membentuk citra budaya dan pengalaman lintas budaya secara global bagi masyarakat.

**Kata Kunci:** Identitas budaya Inggris, Kuliner Inggris, Analisis konten YouTube

## Abstract

Culture is a system of meaning expressed through social practices and material products, including cuisine, which reflects a society's identity. This study analyzes how British cuisine is represented as a cultural identity in YouTube content. The method was qualitative content analysis, using two YouTube videos and several relevant scholarly articles as the main data sources. The data were analyzed to identify forms of cultural representation, social values, and the role of digital media in shaping audience perceptions of British culture. The findings reveal that British cuisine, such as tea, the full English breakfast, and traditional home-cooked meals, is portrayed not merely as a matter of daily consumption but also as a symbol of social interaction, cultural heritage, and national identity. In addition, visual representations and personal experiences presented in the videos strengthen international audiences' interest in modern British culture. This study confirms that YouTube plays an effective role in the dissemination, construction, and understanding of cultural identity in the digital era. The findings also indicate that digital media not only delivers culinary information but also shapes cultural images and cross-cultural experiences globally.

**Keywords:** British cultural identity, British cuisine, YouTube content analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is often understood as a system of shared meanings that shapes how people live, interact, and interpret the world around them. It is expressed not only through beliefs and values but also through tangible elements such as language, symbols, and material products (Ashley, 2004). Among these, cuisine plays a particularly significant role because it connects everyday practices with deeper cultural meanings. Food is not merely a necessity for survival; it reflects traditions, social norms, and collective

identity within a society (Nadra et al., 2025). In this sense, cuisine becomes a powerful medium through which cultural identity is constructed and communicated. However, in the modern era, the cultural meaning of cuisine is increasingly influenced by globalization and digital communication, causing traditional food practices to be reinterpreted and consumed beyond their original social and cultural contexts. As a result, cuisine is no longer viewed only as a local cultural product but also as a global representation that shapes how a culture is perceived internationally.

In the context of British culture, cuisine has historically been viewed in various ways, ranging from traditional, heritage-based practices to modern reinterpretations influenced by globalization (Schmidt, 2014). British cuisine, including well-known items such as tea, fish and chips, and other traditional meals, represents more than just dietary habits. It embodies social rituals, such as afternoon tea, and reflects values like politeness, routine, and social bonding (Mason, 2004; Outing, 2020). These elements highlight how food functions as part of material culture, serving as a visible marker of national identity. Nevertheless, British cuisine has often faced stereotypes and negative global perceptions that describe it as simple or less appealing compared to other international cuisines. Such perceptions create challenges in understanding British food as a meaningful cultural symbol rather than merely a culinary product. Therefore, examining how British cuisine is represented in contemporary media becomes important in order to understand how cultural identity is maintained, reconstructed, and communicated in modern society.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the ways culture is presented and experienced. Platforms such as YouTube have become key spaces where cultural content is produced, distributed, and interpreted by audiences around the world (Park et al., 2017; Pattier, 2021). In contrast to traditional media, YouTube enables creators to showcase culture in more personal, visual, and experience-driven ways. This transformation allows viewers to engage with cultural practices, including cuisine, in forms that feel more authentic and relatable (Qin et al., 2025). Consequently, digital media now holds a significant role in influencing how culture is understood (Mengjia, 2023). At the same time, the accessibility and popularity of YouTube also raise questions about how accurately cultural identities are represented online. Since digital content is often shaped by entertainment value and audience engagement, cultural practices may be simplified, commercialized, or selectively portrayed. This condition creates a gap between authentic cultural representation and media-driven interpretation, especially in the presentation of food culture.

In relation to British cuisine, YouTube content often presents food not only as an object but as an experience (Pattier, 2021). The selected videos in this study, for instance, show how British food is embedded in daily life and social interaction. Through visual storytelling, these videos highlight practices such as tea drinking and dining habits, portraying them as meaningful cultural activities rather than simple routines. This type of representation emphasizes the experiential and symbolic dimensions of cuisine, reinforcing its role as cultural identity. However, the way cuisine is represented visually may also influence audiences to form generalized assumptions about British culture based solely on selected experiences shown in digital media. As a result, audiences may perceive cultural identity through limited or curated representations rather than through broader social realities.

Previous studies have explored the relationship between food and cultural identity, suggesting that cuisine acts as a form of cultural expression and communication (Ashley, 2004). Other research has examined how digital media influences cultural representation, particularly on social media platforms (Feldman & Goodman, 2021). These studies indicate that online platforms contribute to the construction of cultural narratives by allowing individuals to share and reinterpret cultural practices. However, most of this research focuses either on food as a general cultural element or on digital media as a communication tool, rather than integrating both perspectives. In addition, previous studies have rarely focused specifically on British cuisine represented through YouTube content as a form of material culture. This limitation leaves unanswered questions regarding how visual media shape global perceptions of British identity through everyday culinary practices.

Based on these perspectives, this study raises the following research question: How is British cuisine represented as cultural identity through YouTube content? This question is grounded in theories

of material culture, which view physical objects as carriers of cultural meaning, and media representation theory, which explains how media shapes audience perceptions of reality (Qin et al., 2025). By combining these theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to understand how cuisine is both presented and interpreted within digital spaces. This study also addresses the growing importance of digital platforms in shaping cross-cultural understanding and influencing how audiences recognize cultural identity through visual experiences.

Despite the growing body of research on food culture and digital media, there is still a noticeable gap in studies that specifically analyze British cuisine as material culture within YouTube content. Many existing studies focus on traditional media or broader cultural discussions without examining how everyday digital content contributes to cultural representation. In addition, limited attention has been paid to how visual and experiential elements in YouTube videos shape perceptions of cultural identity, particularly in the context of British cuisine. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing selected YouTube videos using a qualitative content analysis approach. By focusing on how British cuisine is visually and contextually represented, this research provides insight into how digital media shapes cultural identity. Furthermore, it highlights how everyday cultural products, such as food, can function as meaningful symbols within global communication. Through this approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between culture, media, and identity in the digital era.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis to examine how British cuisine is represented as cultural identity in YouTube content. The qualitative Approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth interpretation of meanings, symbols, and cultural representations embedded in visual and verbal data. The primary data sources for this study were two YouTube videos: “10 FACTS about BRITAIN! | Listening practice (normal speed of talking!) British culture” published by channel @englishwithkatharine and the YouTube link video (available at <https://youtu.be/ZqMqbigKmZ4?si=81ERIpG76hKgpWWn>), and “Common British Foods We @smashingenglish (available Actually Eat!” published by channel at <https://youtu.be/jhtCKA664hk?si=MvSev-8ayrM11K30>). These two videos were purposively selected because they explicitly present aspects of British daily life and cuisine, making them relevant for analyzing material culture and cultural identity.

The data collection process was conducted systematically. First, both videos were carefully watched multiple times to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content, context, and visual elements presented. Second, important segments related to British cuisine were identified, including scenes, dialogues, and explanations that refer to food, eating habits, and cultural practices. Third, these segments were transcribed and organized into descriptive notes to facilitate deeper analysis. Fourth, the identified data were categorized into themes related to material culture, including food types, modes of consumption, and associated cultural practices.

The data analysis followed several stages of qualitative content analysis. Initially, the researcher conducted open coding to identify recurring patterns and key concepts related to British cuisine. Subsequently, these codes were grouped into broader categories that reflect cultural meanings, such as tradition, social interaction, and national identity. The next step involved interpreting how these categories represent British cuisine not only as physical products but also as symbols of cultural identity. Finally, the findings were synthesized to explain how YouTube content functions as a medium for representing and disseminating British cultural values through cuisine. This systematic process ensured the analysis remained focused, consistent, and aligned with the study's objectives.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The analysis of the two selected YouTube videos, “10 FACTS about BRITAIN! Listening practice (normal speed of talking!) British culture” and “Common British Foods We Actually Eat!”,

reveals that British cuisine is consistently represented as an essential part of cultural identity through everyday practices, traditional food items, and social habits. Based on the qualitative content analysis, the findings are organized into three major themes: British cuisine as everyday material culture, cuisine as a symbol of social interaction, and cuisine as a representation of national identity and tradition.

First, both videos clearly present British cuisine as part of everyday material culture. In the first video, British food is introduced alongside general cultural facts, showing how eating habits are embedded in daily routines. At least three types of food and drink, including tea, breakfast meals, and simple home-based foods, are mentioned as part of daily life. These items are portrayed as normal and repetitive aspects of British routines. Similarly, the second video provides more detailed examples of commonly consumed foods. It presents around four to five traditional dishes, including fish and chips, baked beans, toast, and a full English breakfast. Most of these foods are described as everyday meals rather than special or luxurious dishes. This indicates that British cuisine functions as material culture that reflects daily life, where food becomes a routine practice rather than an occasional activity.

Second, the findings show that British cuisine serves as a medium of social interaction. One of the most prominent examples found in the videos is the practice of drinking tea. Tea is not only described as a popular drink but also as part of a social habit that brings people together. In the first video, tea is mentioned approximately three times and is consistently associated with social activities. The act of having tea is linked to relaxation, conversation, and politeness, which reflects broader social values in British culture.

In addition, the second video highlights how certain foods are often eaten in specific social contexts, such as family meals or casual dining situations. Out of several food items presented, more than half are described in relation to shared eating occasions. This demonstrates that food consumption is closely linked to interpersonal relationships and social bonding. Therefore, cuisine is not only a physical product but also a social practice that carries meaning beyond its functional process.

Third, British cuisine is represented as a marker of national identity and cultural tradition. The foods presented in both videos, such as traditional breakfasts and iconic dishes, are strongly associated with British identity. In total, at least four to five food items, including a full English breakfast, fish and chips, baked beans, and toast, are presented as traditional or culturally significant. Most of these foods are explicitly linked to British identity and are described as well-known national dishes.

These items reflect historical continuity and cultural heritage, showing how certain eating habits have been maintained over time. Even when presented in a modern context through YouTube, these foods still carry symbolic meanings that connect them to British culture. The representation of these dishes emphasizes familiarity, authenticity, and cultural pride, suggesting that cuisine shapes how British identity is understood both locally and globally.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights differences in how the two videos present British cuisine. The first video tends to introduce food as part of the general cultural knowledge, offering brief explanations within a broader discussion of British life. In contrast, the second video focuses more specifically on food, providing detailed descriptions and examples of what people actually eat in everyday situations. This difference in presentation creates two complementary perspectives: one that situates cuisine within a wider cultural framework, and another that emphasizes lived experience and practical consumption. Together, they provide a more complete understanding of how British cuisine functions as cultural identity.

Overall, the findings confirm that British cuisine, as presented in the selected YouTube videos, goes beyond mere sustenance. It is deeply connected to daily routines, social interactions, and national traditions. Through visual and narrative representation, the videos demonstrate how food operates as a meaningful cultural symbol. In line with the objectives of this study, these results show that YouTube serves as an effective medium for representing and communicating cultural identity, particularly by making everyday cultural practices such as cuisine accessible and understandable to a global audience.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that British cuisine, as represented in YouTube content, functions as a meaningful form of material culture that reflects British cultural identity. The presence of everyday foods such as tea, a full English breakfast, and fish and chips indicates that cuisine is not merely a physical necessity but a symbolic system that carries cultural meaning. This aligns with the perspective that food operates as a cultural text through which identity, values, and social norms are expressed (Ashley, 2004; Spence, 2024). In this context, British cuisine becomes a visible and accessible representation of how culture is lived and experienced in daily life.

From the perspective of British cultural identity, the results highlight how traditional food practices contribute to the construction and maintenance of national identity (Schmidt, 2014). The repeated emphasis on tea drinking and traditional meals reflects continuity and cultural heritage within British society. These practices are not random but are deeply rooted in historical and social contexts, reinforcing a shared sense of belonging. This supports the argument that cuisine plays a central role in shaping national identity by linking individuals to collective traditions (Germov, John & Williams, 2017; Schmidt, 2014). Furthermore, food practices such as tea consumption also reflect values like politeness and social harmony, which are often associated with British culture (Ošmjanski, 2024).

In addition, the findings show that British cuisine serves as a medium of social interaction, further strengthening its role in cultural identity formation. The act of sharing meals or engaging in tea time illustrates how food facilitates communication and social bonding. This reflects the idea that cuisine is not only about consumption but also about relationships and social structures (Sozer, 2024; Turner, 2003). Through these practices, individuals participate in cultural routines that reinforce their identity within a social group. Therefore, British cuisine can be known as both a material and a social practice that embodies cultural meaning.

The concept of material culture is particularly relevant in explaining these findings. As Nadra (2025) suggests, material objects such as food carry meanings beyond their physical form. In British cuisine, items such as tea and traditional dishes serve as cultural symbols that represent identity, history, and social values (Nadra et al., 2025). The videos analyzed in this study clearly show how these food items are embedded in everyday contexts, making them powerful indicators of cultural identity. This demonstrates that material culture plays a crucial role in bridging abstract cultural concepts with tangible experiences.

The role of YouTube content analysis in this study provides insight into how digital media shapes cultural representation. Platforms like YouTube allow creators to present cultural practices in visual and narrative forms that are easily accessible to global audiences (Park et al., 2017). The findings indicate that YouTube content does not simply document culture but actively constructs and frames it in specific ways. This is consistent with the idea that digital media serves as a space where cultural meanings are produced and negotiated (Pattier, 2021). Through editing, storytelling, and visual emphasis, content creators influence how viewers perceive British cuisine and, by extension, British cultural identity.

Moreover, the experiential nature of YouTube videos enhances the representation of cuisine as part of lived culture. Unlike traditional academic texts, video content allows audiences to see how food is prepared, consumed, and integrated into daily life. This aligns with the concept of digital storytelling, where personal and visual narratives shape identity construction (Mengjia, 2023). The second video, in particular, emphasizes real-life consumption practices, making the representation of British cuisine more authentic and relatable. This suggests that YouTube plays a significant role in transforming cultural knowledge into engaging and experiential content.

Another important aspect revealed in this study is the role of digital platforms in global cultural dissemination. As Park explains, digital media enables cultural products to cross geographical boundaries and reach diverse audiences (Park et al., 2017). In this case, British cuisine is presented to viewers worldwide, fostering global understanding of British culture. Additional studies also highlight that social media platforms facilitate intercultural exchange by allowing users to access and interpret

cultural content beyond their local context (Pattier, 2021; Qin et al., 2025). This means that YouTube not only represents culture but also helps shape global cultural perceptions.

Furthermore, recent research emphasizes that food-related content on digital platforms often blends authenticity with entertainment, creating a hybrid form of cultural representation (Feldman & Goodman, 2021; Mengjia, 2023). This is evident in the analyzed videos, which present British cuisine in an informative and engaging way. The combination of factual explanation and casual presentation makes the content appealing while still conveying cultural meaning. As a result, viewers are more likely to internalize these representations as authentic reflections of British culture.

Overall, the discussion confirms that British cuisine serves as a key element in representing British cultural identity, particularly when mediated through digital platforms like YouTube. The integration of material culture, social practices, and media representation creates a multidimensional understanding of culture. By analyzing YouTube content, this study demonstrates that cuisine is not only a reflection of identity but also a dynamic medium through which cultural meanings are constructed, shared, and interpreted in the digital era.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how British cuisine is represented as cultural identity through YouTube content, using a qualitative content analysis of two selected videos. The findings show that British cuisine is not merely presented as food for daily consumption, but as a meaningful element of material culture that reflects broader social values, traditions, and national identity. Everyday items such as tea, a full English breakfast, and common home meals are portrayed as integral parts of British life, highlighting how routine practices can carry deep cultural significance.

In addition, the study reveals that British cuisine functions as a medium of social interaction. Practices such as tea drinking are associated with communication, relaxation, and social bonding, indicating that food plays an important role in maintaining interpersonal relationships. These findings reinforce the idea that cuisine is both a physical and social practice, connecting individuals to shared cultural experiences. Furthermore, this research highlights YouTube's role as a powerful platform for cultural representation. Through visual and narrative storytelling, YouTube content makes cultural practices more accessible, engaging, and understandable to global audiences. It not only reflects culture but also shapes how it is perceived and interpreted across different societies and cultural backgrounds, allowing viewers to gain a deeper understanding of British identity through everyday culinary practices.

## SUGGESTIONS

This study still has limitations in the number of data sources used, as it only analyzed two YouTube videos and several related scholarly articles. Therefore, future researchers are recommended to use more data sources from various digital media platforms in order to obtain broader and more in-depth findings. In addition, future studies may compare the representation of British cuisine with the cuisines of other countries to identify differences in cultural identity represented through digital media. Future researchers may also apply other research methods, such as discourse analysis or audience studies, to understand how viewers interpret and respond to cultural representations in YouTube content. Thus, research on cuisine as a form of cultural identity in the digital era can be further developed in a more comprehensive way and provide greater contributions to cultural and digital media studies.

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