



Tales More Than Just a Game: Dissecting Roblox as a Popular Culture and Digital Social Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores Roblox as a significant phenomenon within contemporary popular culture, focusing on its widespread influence among Generation Z and Alpha. Roblox is not merely a gaming platform but an expansive digital ecosystem that integrates creativity, social interaction, and economic activity. The study discusses four main factors that illustrate Roblox's role in popular culture: addiction and its cognitive consequences often described as 'brainrot', the rise of digital consumerism fueled by the Robux virtual currency, the emergence of cyberculture through customizable avatars that sometimes exhibit inappropriate content, and Roblox's function as a "third place" replacement for offline social spaces. By analyzing these factors, the paper reveals the complex socio-cultural dynamics of Roblox and underscores the urgency of critical digital literacy, content regulation, and balanced digital engagement. This research contributes to understanding how digital platforms redefine cultural participation and social interaction in the digital age.

Keyword: Tales Roblox, Popular Culture, Gaming Addiction, Digital Consumerism, Third Place



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1. Introduction

Popular culture is one of the important aspects in understanding social and cultural phenomena in the modern era. It reflects how diverse cultural, lifestyle, entertainment, and technological products are accepted and shape patterns of interaction, norms, and collective identities in the wider society. Popular culture is not just a temporary entertainment, but an integral part of social dynamics that reflect the wants and needs of the community. With the advancement of digital technology, popular culture has undergone an increasingly complex transformation, where the digital ecosystem has become the main stage in the formation of today's youth culture (Williams, 1983; Messianik, 2023). These changes prove that popular culture continues to evolve in line with changes in media and increasingly fast and interactive ways of communication.

Among the various digital cultural phenomena that have emerged, Roblox stands out as one of the online and social gaming platforms that is gaining tremendous popularity, especially among generations Z and Alpha. The platform not only provides a play environment, but also a space for creativity, collaboration, and broad and dynamic expression of digital identity. With over 111 million daily active users by 2025, the platform is showing mass appeal across different age groups, despite being originally a small sandbox released in 2006. There are 32.5 million Roblox users under the age of 13, however the older user segment (13+) is the

fastest-growing, with 52.1 million daily active users over the age of 13. The majority of Roblox users are male (53%), while (39%) are female. Roblox offers unique social experiences such as building virtual worlds, interacting with friends online, to creating your own content that can be accessed by the global community (DemandSage, 2025; FreedomX, 2025). This popularity further cements Roblox as an important part of digital popular culture that is not only entertaining but also shaping the way younger generations communicate and socialize.

Roblox can be categorized as a part of popular culture due to its interactive and participatory nature, where users play the role of cultural actors who actively produce and consume content according to evolving trends. This is in line with the understanding of popular culture that places audiences as an integral part of the cultural production process, not just as passive consumers (Arifin et al., 2024). The platform opens up space for children and adolescents to develop creativity while building a digital identity rooted in community culture, resulting in distinctive cultural patterns and influencing broader social discourse. The urgency of discussing Roblox in the context of popular culture is especially important given the complexity of the phenomenon that emerges within the platform. Social impacts such as addiction that leads to brainrot, consumerism patterns triggered by the purchase of Robux, and the risk of cyber culture in the form of inappropriate content that threatens young users make Roblox a relevant study subject in a multidisciplinary manner (Grayson, 2023). Furthermore, Roblox serves as a digital "third space," replacing conventional physical social spaces with virtual spaces that provide a wide range of flexible and broad social interaction opportunities for young generations (Kompasiana, 2024). This transformation raises important reflections on how today's popular culture is not only influenced by technology, but also how technology is reshaping forms of interaction, identity, and cultural consumption in the digital age.

2. Method

This research applies a Descriptive Qualitative approach with a Library Research design. This approach was chosen to unravel the complexity of socio-cultural phenomena in the Roblox ecosystem in depth, without statistical intervention. The main focus of the research is to dissect the dynamics of interaction between Generation Z and Alpha through four critical lenses: (1) The phenomenon of short attention (Brainrot), (2) Culture of Digital Consumerism (Robux Economy), (3) Cyberculture and security risk (Child Grooming), and (4) Transformation of the function of social space (Digital Third Place).

Data collection is carried out through the Documentation Study technique. The researcher conducts an inventory, classification, and synthesis of relevant secondary data. Data sources include academic literature (journals/books), popular culture articles, digital consumer behavior reports, as well as visual documentation related to updates and trends within the Roblox platform. The data collected is not only read, but reduced to separate essential information from information distortion.

3. Results and Discussion

Roblox can no longer be underestimated as just a children's game. If we delve further than just download statistics, we will find a giant ecosystem that lives, breathes, and continues to evolve. Through a search of the literature and an in-depth observation of the dynamics that occur, it is clear that this platform has mutated. It is no longer just an entertainment app, but a significant artifact of popular culture. In the lens of cultural studies, this phenomenon confirms that popular culture is not just a product that is consumed, but an arena where meaning is produced and exchanged. Roblox has fundamentally changed the way Generation Z and Alpha interact, think, and shape their collective identities, making it an inevitable marker of an era for this digital generation.

Structurally, Roblox is different from conventional digital games, and this is what makes it an effective cultural machine. The platform does not present a single narrative, but rather provides thousands of user-generated content games from different parts of the world. This means that the players are not just passive consumers of mass culture, they are active participants who explore and shape a virtual world that continues to expand every day. For Gen Z and Alpha, a shift in function occurred, games are no longer just solitary entertainment, but the main means of socialization. Roblox has become a virtual square where they meet friends, form groups, and hold concerts or digital birthday celebrations. This activity shows that Roblox has merged into everyday social practices, proving that in contemporary popular culture, the boundaries between real life and digital interaction are now increasingly blurred.

3.1 The Effects of Roblox Addiction and the Brainrot Phenomenon

The issue of psychological addiction in the digital era is now a major concern, especially focusing on Generation Z and Alpha. Both generations, which grew up amidst rapid advances in digital technology, show a unique pattern of media consumption, with a high level of engagement in online games and the use of other digital platforms. Roblox, as a gaming platform that is very popular with Generation Z and Alpha, does offer a very interesting and addictive gaming experience. The variable ratio reinforcement mechanism and the ever-increasing variety of activities make it difficult for users, especially children and adolescents, to escape from the screen. Psychological research and user case studies show that online gaming addiction is known to cause a variety of negative impacts, including mental, physical, and social health problems. The involvement of excessive screen time use often involves between 5 to 6 hours of play time every day, of course this can cause anxiety disorders, depression, and emotional disturbances. Addicted individuals often experience changes in brain function and emotional instability, which makes them irritable or frustrated when failing in a game, even exhibiting aggressive behaviors such as using harsh words or hitting objects. Behaviorally and academically, gaming addiction leads to a decrease in learning motivation and academic performance, where addicted students often neglect assignments and responsibilities, thus choosing to skip school and feeling sleepy during lessons due to staying up late. In addition, on the social side, online gaming addiction can cause social isolation, which makes individuals more closed, and reduces social interaction with friends or family (Edusoshum, 2024).

This excessive digital behavior of course directly triggers the condition of Brainrot, where the phenomenon of brainrot addiction to digital stimulation erodes their cognitive abilities and emotional stability. The Brainrot phenomenon that is often talked about among players refers to a deteriorating mental state due to frequent exposure to repetitive, absurd, and uneducational content that circulates in this game (Inclusive Teach, 2025). Viral content on Roblox sometimes focuses more on superficial entertainment, memes, and simple games that are time-consuming without providing cognitive value, thus triggering real mental degradation in users, especially children who are still in the development of their brains. The phenomenon of Brainrot, which was chosen as the Oxford Word of the Year 2024, has undergone a significant shift from just a slang term circulating among Generation Z and Generation Alpha, to a psychological dilemma that is universally and academically recognized. Oxford defines Brainrot as "a deterioration that is alleged to occur in a person's mental or intellectual state, primarily seen as a result of excessive consumption of material (particularly online content) that is considered trivial or unchallenging". This definition directly points to the trivial content that is at the heart of the problem psikologis dilematis yang dihadapi generasi muda (Gen Z and Gen Alpha), due to excessive exposure to low-quality online materials. Key factors driving Brainrot include excess screen time and digital addiction, where the platform is designed to maintain attention through dopamine-driven feedback loops. Brainrot can occur through specific digital behaviors such as Doomscrolling, which is the compulsive scrolling of negative content that increases anxiety, stress, and cognitive overload, and Zombie Scrolling, which is passive scrolling through social media aimlessly, which leads to cognitive depletion and reduces the capacity for sustained focus. The cognitive impact of Brainrot is impaired in executive function, which includes distorted memory, where constant distractions inhibit long-term retention, shortened attention spans, and decreased problem-solving abilities, as dependence on digital tools reduces cognitive flexibility and triggers impulsivity (MDPI, 2025).

Online Game Addiction and Brain Rot are two phenomena that have a strong linkage, excessive screen time directly being the main source of stimulation that drives cognitive overload and mental fatigue Brainrot. Both behaviors are driven by similar dopamine addiction mechanisms, and the effects overlap, online gaming addiction causes alterations in brain function and decreased academic ability, in line with Brainrot's findings related to cognitive decline (memory, attention) and emotional disturbances (anxiety, depression). In short, online gaming addiction is an intensive manifestation of excessive digital behavior that directly triggers Brainrot's condition, in which addiction to digital stimulation erodes their cognitive abilities and emotional stability. Therefore, mitigation strategies should focus on screen timing, digital content curation, and engagement in non-digital activities to support the cognitive resilience and mental health of younger generations.

3.2 Consumerism and Gamification Issues on Roblox

Roblox has grown to be more than just an entertainment platform; It plays an important role as a driver of the digital economy among children and adolescents. Gamification mechanisms that rely on Robux as a virtual currency that must be purchased with real money encourage extremely high user engagement, creating a repetitive buying cycle. Users, especially children, are encouraged to buy various digital items such as

clothes, accessories, and emotes so that their avatars are unique and considered cool in virtual communities. This shopping cycle is driven by social pressure to appear special in digital communities, which is similar to the way people judge social status through luxury items in the real world (Tobon, 2020).

This gamification not only strengthens users' emotional bond with the platform, but also significantly increases loyalty and ongoing purchase intent. When children are able to show their digital identity through rare or exclusive items, they feel recognized by the community, so the intention to continue buying is very high. This makes Roblox a virtual economy ecosystem that adopts children's unique and sophisticated digital consumption patterns. This fact is supported by research that shows that variables such as customer satisfaction and feelings of happiness due to virtual item ownership significantly affect purchasing decisions on the platform (Zikri, 2025).

This phenomenon of consumerism shows how social norms and values are moving from the physical realm to the digital realm. In the virtual world of Roblox, the ownership of digital items has become a status symbol that is very influential in building children's social identities. However, this pressure also carries risks, especially for young users who do not yet have a mature financial understanding or control that makes it easy to deal with impulse buying addiction. If not accompanied by proper financial education, this consumptive culture can have a long-term negative impact on children's financial mindset and values (Abyantara, 2025).

With its position as a driver of children's digital economy, platforms like Roblox must be a serious concern for parents, educators, and policymakers in order to provide adequate financial education and digital literacy. Thus, not only the entertainment aspect is developed, but also the ability of young users to manage digital consumption and interaction in a healthy and responsible manner in order to prevent the negative effects of this virtual consumerism.

3.3 Cyberculture and Child Grooming in Custom Characters

Roblox allows for high freedom of expression through character customization features, which is both an attraction and a big challenge. Many users, especially the younger generation, take advantage of this feature to create avatars with clothes and styles that are sometimes too open and lead to elements of sexuality. According to a report by The Guardian (2025), the children of Roblox users are particularly vulnerable to exposure to inappropriate content and opportunities for negative interactions with adult predators who take advantage of this virtual social space. Exposure like this can interfere with the moral and psychological development of children who are still in the growth and development period (The Guardian, 2025). One of the problems that arises is the sexuality of children's avatars through clothing or styles that are too open, which reflects the entry of cyber culture that contains elements of child grooming. This is a big concern because Roblox was originally intended as a children's entertainment platform. Furthermore, free interaction in the virtual world opens a gap for adult predators who can manipulate and approach children online in ways that are difficult to detect and control (Grayson, 2023; Inclusive Teach, 2025).

In addition to the threat of content, the biggest challenge is the lack of adequate digital literacy in parents and children so that they are not prepared for these risks. Comprehensive digital literacy education is needed so that children and parents understand how to secure the use of the platform and recognize the signs of negative interactions. Without this education, children become vulnerable to cybercrime such as grooming which has a long-term impact on their mental health and safety (The Guardian, 2025). Therefore, child protection on digital platforms like Roblox should involve cooperation between developers, parents, and regulators to implement strict content regulations and interactive supervision systems. This effort is critical for Roblox to become a safe digital space, helping children explore their creativity without being exposed to the dangers of cyberculture that threatens their safety and psychosocial development.

3.4 Roblox as the Third Space for Generation Z and Alpha

The concept of a third space, which usually refers to alternative social spaces outside the home and workplace such as cafes or parks, is now shifting to digital spaces for younger generations. Roblox has taken on the role of a digital third space for Generation Z and Alpha, where they not only play zzzx c games but also gather, socialize, and do various social activities that were previously done offline. Starting from virtual hangouts, online birthday parties, to digital mountain rides, everything can be done on Roblox (Kompasiana, 2024). In the context of the pandemic and lifestyle changes that rely more on technology, Roblox has become the main place to interact socially and express one's identity in cyberspace. This phenomenon shows a shift in physical to digital social interaction, where offline spaces that used to be gathering places are now replaced by a more flexible and spacious virtual world. Roblox provides a platform that allows young generations to build

communities, explore creativity, and reflect on themselves in an immersive, geographically boundless environment (Kompasiana, 2024; Disway Daily, 2025). This marks a major shift in how popular culture is shaped and practiced in the digital age.

Furthermore, the concept of Roblox as a third space has now evolved significantly. This platform is no longer just a place for passive interaction, such as playing together or exchanging messages in one experience, but has transformed into a self-contained full content ecosystem. The main evidence of this shift is the launch of the "Roblox Moments" feature, which functionally mimics the vertical video format in the style of TikTok. This feature is a native content feed that allows players to record short video clips (up to 30 seconds) directly from within their experience and share them on the platform. Strategically, it "brings home" all content creation and consumption activities that were previously "leaked" to competing platforms like TikTok and YouTube, where Roblox-related content has been viewed trillions of times. What distinguishes "Moments" from passive interaction is the creation of a powerful "discovery loop", unlike traditional social media where viewers can only search for viral games, "Moments" allow users to instantly feel or move into the experience they just watched from a video feed. Thus, Roblox transforms passive interactions into active cycles where content consumption instantly encourages participation, strengthening its position as a whole ecosystem (GEEIQ, 2025).

4. Conclusion

Roblox has become more than just a gaming platform; it has become a complex and significant popular cultural phenomenon, especially for Generation Z and Alpha. Through this discussion, it can be seen that the addiction caused by Roblox not only affects the behavior patterns of young users, but also contributes to the phenomenon of brainrot that has an impact on their mental health. In addition, the emergence of an intense pattern of digital consumerism through the use of the virtual currency Robux shows how cyberspace can form new social and economic habits that need to be critically understood. No less important, the characterization of users in Roblox that often includes elements of open clothing and sexual behavior makes this platform a cyberculture space that poses a risk of exposure to age-appropriate content.

In addition to these aspects, Roblox also serves as a third space that replaces traditional physical social spaces, providing a space for young people to interact and express themselves in a virtual context that is increasingly dominating their lives. Thus, Roblox became a symbol of popular cultural change in the digital age that combined entertainment, economy, and social interaction in one ecosystem. Given the complexity and far-reaching impact it causes, further research and understanding of the Roblox phenomenon as part of popular culture is essential to provide critical views and appropriate solutions related to addiction issues, child protection, and regulation of the digital economy. This topic offers space for the development of cross-disciplinary studies that can help map the social and cultural implications of ongoing digital transformation.

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