**“International interactions always result in the homogenization of culture.” Discuss this statement (16 marks)**

Homogenization of culture is the process whereby the culture of a country increasingly resembles those of other countries because similar processes of change are at work. Today, many major cities and countries around the world are beginning to look similar to each other. The process of globalization, in which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating at international scales, has had increasingly major impacts on the homogenization of culture. As cities develop and attempt to meet the demands of its inhabitants, they become increasingly uniform. Such homogenization of culture can be

significantly affected by international interactions between countries throughout the world.

International influences such as international migration and improved communications between countries have resulted in people being aware of and demanding the same products and lifestyle as someone else across the world. Today, global brands such as Starbucks and McDonald’s are found in a multitude of locations throughout one major city. By repeating the same customer experience, such TNCs save money on marketing, advertising and design. In particularly poor countries, it also allows them to present themselves as part of an aspirational lifestyle making their products all the more desirable.

Singapore, a sovereign city-state in South-east Asia, is an example of the homogenization of culture as a result of international interactions such as tourism. Since 2014, when the city received 15 million visitors, there have been huge investments in the tourist infrastructure. It possesses many tourist attractions such as the botanic gardens, the Marina Bay Sands Casino Hotel, Universal Studios and the Gardens by the Bay which contain a cloud forest dome. The city also hosts a Formula 1 night race which helps to secure its international reputation as a global center. Singapore hosts many well-known global brands within its contemporary shopping malls such as Chanel, Hermes, Louis Vuitton and Ralph Lauren emphasizing the strong presence of globalization throughout the city. Like many other cities throughout the world, Singapore also possesses a finance-scape which is a modern landscape of tower blocks and offices that incorporates state-of-the-art architecture usually designed to impress visitors. The city’s waterfront is the main financial center which possesses many international banks such as Citibank, HSBC, Bank of India, American Express and Barclays. Such features demonstrate the homogenization of culture throughout Singapore as it continues to host global brands and corporations present throughout the world and possesses modern landscapes often similar to other major cities based on the transnational work of leading global architects and architecture firms. Yet despite this, the city still has its own unique characteristics. As the city has a large migrant community, Singapore possesses a wide range of cultures. It contains a ‘Little India’, ‘Chinatown’ and ‘Arab Street,’ each area dedicated to preserving these cultures. This suggests the presence of cultural preservation despite the prevalence of increasing homogenization and globalization.

Despite the increase in globalization and interactions between different countries around the world, there are certain cities that purposefully aim to protect its historical culture in spite of a large international presence.

Venice, for example, receives 20 million tourists each year from all around the globe yet the historic center within the city is protected from alteration by government legislation. This demonstrates intentional efforts to prevent homogenization and preserve the history behind the city’s landscape and culture. As a result, unlike other major cities that experience globalization, Venice does not possess a finance-scape. In 2011, the city was threatened by developers who wanted to demolish the famous fish market at the foot of the Rialto Bridge to expand docks that accommodate for cruise ships. However, such attempts were apprehended by activists trying to safeguard Venice’s cultural and best-loved institutions.

Yet, despite such efforts to prevent homogenization throughout the city, in 2009, the city council allowed Coca-Cola to place vending machines in some of the city’s most historic areas through a $1.8 million deal. This took place in a desperate attempt to produce money for Venice’s regular maintenance program in order to prevent many of the city’s historic churches from falling into disrepair. This demonstrates that, although such a deal was made to protect the historical and unique cultural aspects of the city, it has, ironically, resulted in increased homogenization of culture as a global brand like Coca-Cola being introduced on a mass scale throughout the city may encourage other TNCs to attempt to expand their presence within the area as well, thus diminishing the individuality of Venice.

International interactions can result in the homogenization of culture depending on whether a city or country decides to use it to their economic advantage. Singapore, for example, has accepted its increasing homogenization as the increasing prevalence of tourism and presence of TNCs has led to its high GDP. Resistance to such homogenization of culture despite increased international interactions may help to preserve unique aspects of a city such as Venice, however, as the world develops and it becomes easier to travel around the globe, it becomes equally harder to prevent cultural homogenization. As a result, although increasing international interactions may not result in a homogenization of culture immediately, it is likely that a city or country’s individuality will eventually transition to conform to a globalized and homogenous society.