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SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS ROLE IN PRESERVING CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an important communication tool in modern society, significantly influencing the preservation, promotion, and transmission of cultural identity and heritage. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other digital networks provide opportunities for individuals and communities to share their cultural traditions, historical knowledge, languages, festivals, music, traditional clothing, food, and artistic expressions with national and international audiences. In the past, cultural knowledge was mainly transferred through families, educational institutions, community gatherings, and traditional communication methods. However, digital communication has introduced new ways of documenting and sharing cultural information across geographical boundaries. This research examines the role of social media in preserving cultural identity and heritage, focusing on its opportunities, challenges, and influence on modern generations. The study explores how digital platforms encourage cultural awareness, promote traditional practices, strengthen community participation, and support the transmission of historical knowledge. It also considers challenges such as misinformation, cultural misrepresentation, commercialization, declining authenticity, and the influence of international trends. The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on secondary academic sources and thematic analysis. The study emphasizes the importance of responsible digital communication, community involvement, educational initiatives, and cultural documentation. It concludes that social media can serve as an effective instrument for cultural preservation when used responsibly and supported by authentic community participation. Digital platforms should be utilized not only for entertainment but also for protecting cultural diversity and maintaining historical connections for future generations.

KEYWORDS:*Social Media, Cultural Identity, Cultural Heritage, Digital Preservation, Cultural Diversity, Traditional Values, Digital Communication, Cultural Awareness, Historical Preservation, Modern Society.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become one of the most influential features of modern society, transforming the ways people communicate, exchange information, develop relationships, and share cultural experiences. Kirtiklis, K., Laužikas, R., Kelpšienė, I., & Dallas, C. (2023). Found that, Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other online networks allow individuals to communicate with people from different geographical and cultural backgrounds. These platforms have created new opportunities for sharing historical knowledge, traditional practices, cultural celebrations, languages, music, literature, and artistic expressions. Cultural heritage, which represents the historical experiences, traditions, beliefs, and collective identity of communities, can now reach international audiences through digital communication. Social media has therefore developed into an important space for cultural representation and preservation. Uus, A. U., Kyriakopoulou, V., Makropoulos, A., Fukami-Gartner, A., Cromb, D., Davidson, A., ... & Deprez, M. (2023). Elobrated on, Kirtiklis et al. (2023) explain the significance of heritage, memory, and identity practices on social network sites, demonstrating the importance of digital environments in understanding cultural conversations and collective memories.Cultural identity represents the shared values, beliefs, language, traditions, historical experiences, and social practices that distinguish one community from another. It provides individuals with a sense of belonging and connects present generations with their historical backgrounds. Traditionally, cultural identity was

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preserved through family relationships, educational systems, religious institutions, storytelling, festivals, and community participation. However, modernization, migration, urbanization, and globalization have changed the ways people experience and maintain their cultural identities.

Social media has introduced a new method of cultural communication by allowing individuals to record traditional activities, share historical photographs, publish cultural information, and communicate with people who have similar cultural backgrounds. These digital activities can strengthen cultural awareness and encourage younger generations to understand their historical traditions.One of the most important contributions of social media is its ability to promote traditional languages and cultural expressions. Many communities use digital platforms to share poetry, folk songs, traditional stories, historical discussions, and educational materials in their native languages. Video-sharing platforms allow traditional artists, musicians, writers, and cultural performers to present their work to wider audiences. This development is particularly valuable for communities whose languages and cultural practices receive limited attention in mainstream media. Digital content can also create opportunities for younger people to learn traditional expressions that may not be regularly practiced in their everyday environments. Through online interaction, cultural knowledge can move beyond geographical boundaries and become accessible to international audiences.Social media also plays an important role in documenting and promoting tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Tangible heritage includes historical buildings, monuments, archaeological sites, traditional clothing, handicrafts, and cultural objects, whereas intangible heritage includes languages, music, dance, festivals, rituals, oral traditions, and traditional knowledge. Individuals and cultural organizations can use photographs, videos, digital archives, and educational posts to document these cultural resources. Hiscock et al. (2023) examine how heritage values are created and represented within social media environments. Their research highlights the importance of understanding the different ways digital platforms influence the visibility and interpretation of cultural heritage. This demonstrates that social media can contribute to cultural documentation while also influencing how people understand historical places and traditions.Another important aspect of social media is its influence on younger generations and their understanding of cultural identity. Young people spend considerable time using digital communication platforms, where they encounter international lifestyles, entertainment, fashion, and cultural information. This exposure can sometimes reduce their interest in local traditions, but social media can also encourage them to rediscover their cultural backgrounds.

Young content creators can share traditional recipes, clothing, festivals, music, handicrafts, and historical information through creative digital content. Online cultural communities can connect younger people with older generations and traditional knowledge holders. Therefore, social media has the potential to establish stronger connections between cultural heritage and modern youth.Despite its advantages, social media also creates several challenges for cultural preservation. Cultural information may be presented inaccurately, traditional practices may be modified for entertainment, and historical knowledge may be shared without proper context. Commercial interests and platform trends can encourage creators to prioritize popularity and audience engagement instead of cultural authenticity. Furthermore, digital content may represent certain communities more visibly than others, resulting in unequal cultural representation. Research by Tan et al. (2026) emphasizes that digital safeguarding of

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intangible cultural heritage requires meaningful community participation alongside technological development. Their review highlights the risk of preserving digital representations without maintaining the living cultural practices and knowledge that give heritage its meaning.The relationship between social media and cultural heritage is therefore an important subject for contemporary academic research. Digital platforms provide valuable opportunities for documenting historical knowledge, promoting traditional practices, strengthening cultural identity, and encouraging international cultural exchange. At the same time, misinformation, commercialization, cultural misrepresentation, and unequal digital participation require careful attention. Ju et al. (2026) examine how senior inheritors of traditional Dixi performances use social media to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and maintain community identity. Their research highlights the importance of cultural practitioners in digital preservation. This study investigates how social media can contribute to cultural identity and heritage preservation while emphasizing the need for authenticity, community participation, and responsible digital practices.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the role of social media in preserving cultural identity and heritage through digital communication, cultural awareness, and the promotion of traditional practices.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does social media contribute to the preservation and promotion of cultural identity and heritage in modern society?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media and cultural heritage have become significant subjects in contemporary academic research because digital communication has changed the ways cultural knowledge is produced, shared, and preserved. Zhang, R., Zhou, Z. Q., Tan, Y., Zhan, R., Mei, W., & Wang, G. (2026). Found that, Kirtiklis et al. (2023) present a conceptual framework for understanding heritage, memory, and identity practices on social network sites. Their research explains how digital conversations contribute to the representation of historical knowledge and collective cultural experiences. The study highlights that social networking platforms are not simply communication spaces but also environments where people express cultural meanings, share memories, and develop connections with their historical backgrounds. This perspective demonstrates that social media can contribute to cultural preservation by providing opportunities for communities to communicate their traditions and identities.Hiscock et al. (2023) investigate heritage values in social media environments through research focusing on the Old Gas Works area in Edinburgh, United Kingdom. Their study examines how cultural values and historical meanings become visible or invisible through interactions among people, digital platforms, and cultural information. The research suggests that social media can influence how communities understand and interpret heritage sites. It also highlights the importance of considering different perspectives when documenting and representing cultural heritage online. Shahzad, A., Sohail, Y., Ameer, A., Amara, D. B., Zahra, A., Aslam, U., & Tang, D. (2026). Explained, This study is relevant

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because cultural preservation through social media requires more than sharing photographs; it also involves understanding historical meanings, community experiences, and the different interpretations associated with cultural places.Tan et al. (2026) examine community-engaged digital safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through a review of existing research. Their study synthesizes 79 studies published between 2010 and 2025 and introduces a Technology-Community Synergy Framework.

The research emphasizes that technological development alone cannot guarantee the successful preservation of traditional cultural practices. Ju, B., Sandel, T. L., & Fu, W. (2026). Revealed,Community participation, cultural knowledge, and the involvement of traditional practitioners are equally important. The authors identify challenges such as the digital divide and the risk of preserving digital representations without maintaining living cultural practices. Their findings demonstrate that social media and other digital tools should support communities rather than replace their traditional cultural activities.Ju et al. (2026) investigate the social media practices of senior Dixi inheritors and their contribution to intangible cultural heritage preservation. Their research focuses on traditional Chinese Ground Opera and the use of WeChat by older cultural practitioners. The study demonstrates how social media can create digital communities where traditional knowledge, cultural expressions, and shared identities are maintained. It also emphasizes that older generations have valuable cultural knowledge that should be recognized in digital preservation activities. This research provides an important understanding of intergenerational cultural communication because it demonstrates how traditional practitioners can use modern technology to transmit cultural knowledge and strengthen community belonging.Bao and Hashim (2026) examine the relationship between platform-based cultural production, authenticity, and digital sustainability in intangible cultural heritage preservation. Their research introduces a Platformised Authenticity Framework based on a systematic literature review, bibliometric analysis, and interviews with eight stakeholders. The study identifies three important stages: the display of heritage through digital content, audience perceptions of authenticity, and the cultural experiences created through participation and interaction. Their findings suggest that digital platforms influence how cultural heritage is presented and understood by online audiences. This research highlights the importance of maintaining authenticity while adapting traditional cultural practices to modern digital environments.Wang Xiaojing and Balakrishnan (2026) examine the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and social media through a systematic literature review. Their research analyzes 29 empirical studies and identifies important themes, including digital heritage presentation, user participation, cultural narratives, authenticity, cultural identity, and sustainable development.

The study explains that social media provides opportunities for cultural promotion and interaction while creating new questions about how traditional knowledge is represented online. It also highlights the importance of combining qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research approaches to understand the relationship between digital communication and cultural preservation. This research provides a useful foundation for examining how online participation can strengthen public awareness of traditional heritage.Overall, the reviewed literature demonstrates that social media has become an important instrument for documenting, promoting, and transmitting cultural heritage. Previous studies emphasize digital communication, cultural authenticity, community involvement, historical memory, and

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the participation of traditional knowledge holders. However, they also identify challenges related to commercialization, inaccurate cultural representation, technological inequality, and the possible separation of digital content from living cultural practices. The present study builds upon these academic discussions by examining the role of social media in preserving cultural identity and heritage in modern society. It emphasizes that successful digital preservation requires cooperation between technology users, cultural organizations, educational institutions, families, and local communities.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative methodology to examine the role of social media in preserving cultural identity and heritage. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on cultural experiences, historical meanings, traditional practices, community participation, and digital communication. These aspects require an understanding of social behavior and cultural interpretation rather than numerical measurement alone. The methodology provides an opportunity to explore how individuals and communities use digital platforms to communicate their traditions, preserve historical knowledge, and strengthen cultural identities. It also helps identify the opportunities and challenges associated with online cultural representation.The study is based on secondary data collected from academic journal articles, scholarly publications, research papers, and relevant cultural heritage studies published in 2023 and 2026. The selected literature covers social media communication, digital preservation, intangible cultural heritage, cultural identity, community participation, and technological development. Academic research from different geographical regions is considered to understand how social media contributes to cultural preservation in different social environments. The use of secondary sources provides a foundation for comparing existing research findings and identifying important developments in digital cultural preservation.The collected information is examined through thematic analysis to identify common patterns and major research themes. The analysis focuses on digital cultural documentation, traditional language promotion, cultural awareness, historical preservation, intergenerational communication, online participation, and cultural authenticity. Information from different academic sources is compared to identify similarities, differences, and important arguments. This approach helps explain how social media can support both tangible and intangible heritage and how digital platforms influence people's understanding of their cultural backgrounds.Ethical considerations are maintained by acknowledging original researchers, accurately presenting academic findings, and avoiding unsupported claims.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research follows a descriptive and analytical research design to examine how social media contributes to the preservation of cultural identity and heritage. The descriptive component explains the major functions of digital platforms in cultural communication, documentation, and promotion. It considers how photographs, videos, educational posts, digital storytelling, and online communities are used to represent traditional practices and historical experiences. The analytical component evaluates the opportunities and challenges associated with these activities and examines their importance for cultural sustainability.A literature-based research design is employed to organize and evaluate existing academic

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knowledge. Relevant publications are selected according to their connection with social media, cultural heritage, digital preservation, and cultural identity. The selected studies cover different geographical and cultural environments, providing an opportunity to understand how communities use digital platforms to maintain their historical traditions. This approach also allows the researcher to compare different academic perspectives and identify common themes related to online cultural participation and heritage preservation.The research design is organized around four major dimensions. The first dimension examines how social media promotes cultural awareness and strengthens cultural identity. The second focuses on digital documentation of traditional languages, festivals, music, handicrafts, historical sites, and cultural knowledge. The third examines the role of younger generations, traditional practitioners, and online communities in transmitting cultural information. The fourth considers challenges such as misinformation, cultural commercialization, authenticity, and unequal access to digital technologies. These dimensions provide a systematic structure for answering the research question.The design also considers the importance of cooperation between digital technology and traditional cultural institutions. Social media platforms can provide access to large audiences, but successful cultural preservation requires accurate information and meaningful participation from local communities.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the reviewed literature indicates that social media provides important opportunities for documenting and sharing cultural heritage. Digital photographs, videos, online archives, and storytelling activities allow communities to preserve information about historical places, traditional celebrations, artistic practices, and cultural experiences. These materials can be accessed by people living in different geographical regions and can help increase public awareness of cultural heritage. Research by Tan et al. (2026) highlights the importance of combining digital safeguarding methods with community participation to maintain the continuity of intangible cultural heritage.Another important theme identified through the analysis is the role of social media in strengthening cultural identity among younger generations. Online platforms provide opportunities for young people to explore their languages, traditional clothing, music, food, literature, and historical backgrounds. Digital cultural communities can connect younger users with older generations and traditional knowledge holders. These interactions can encourage cultural pride and improve understanding of historical traditions. However, the influence of international entertainment and rapidly changing online trends may sometimes reduce attention toward local cultural practices.The literature also indicates that social media can promote cultural heritage to international audiences and create opportunities for cultural exchange. Traditional artists, musicians, craftspeople, and cultural organizations can present their work through digital platforms and reach audiences beyond their local communities. This exposure can support cultural tourism, promote traditional products, and create greater appreciation for cultural diversity. However, commercial interests and the demand for popular content can sometimes encourage inaccurate representations or unnecessary changes in traditional practices. Therefore, maintaining cultural authenticity is an important consideration in digital heritage communication.

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FINDINGS

The research findings indicate that social media plays an important role in preserving and promoting cultural identity and heritage in modern society. Digital platforms provide opportunities for communities to document traditional activities, share historical knowledge, and introduce cultural practices to wider audiences. Photographs, videos, digital storytelling, and online discussions help maintain cultural information that might otherwise receive limited public attention. The findings suggest that social media has expanded the possibilities of cultural preservation by making traditional knowledge more accessible to different generations and geographical communities.The study identifies younger generations as an important part of digital cultural preservation. Young people can use social media to explore their cultural backgrounds, learn traditional languages, understand historical events, and participate in cultural celebrations. Online interaction with older generations and traditional practitioners can strengthen cultural awareness and intergenerational communication. The findings also indicate that digital cultural content can encourage young people to take greater interest in their historical identities. However, continuous exposure to international trends makes cultural education and awareness increasingly important.Another important finding is that social media supports the international promotion of cultural diversity. Traditional artists, musicians, writers, craftspeople, and cultural organizations can introduce their work to audiences from different countries. This can increase appreciation for traditional knowledge and create opportunities for cultural tourism and economic development. Nevertheless, the research identifies concerns about cultural misrepresentation, commercialization, and the loss of authenticity. The findings suggest that digital cultural promotion should respect historical meanings and involve the communities responsible for maintaining traditional practices.The research further finds that effective digital cultural preservation requires cooperation among individuals, families, educational institutions, governments, and cultural organizations.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the role of social media in preserving cultural identity and heritage in modern society. The study demonstrates that digital communication has transformed the ways people document, share, and promote their cultural traditions. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok provide opportunities to communicate historical knowledge, traditional languages, music, festivals, handicrafts, and cultural practices with wider audiences. Social media has therefore become an important instrument for cultural awareness and digital heritage preservation.The study concludes that social media can strengthen cultural identity by connecting individuals with their historical backgrounds and traditional values. Younger generations can use digital platforms to learn about their cultural heritage and develop an appreciation for their community traditions. Online cultural communities also encourage communication between different generations and allow traditional knowledge holders to share their experiences. However, the influence of international trends, misinformation, and cultural commercialization can create challenges for maintaining authentic cultural expressions.The research further emphasizes that successful cultural preservation requires responsible use of technology and active community participation. Governments, educational institutions, families, museums, and cultural organizations should encourage digital documentation and promote authentic cultural information. Traditional languages, historical sites, folk music, festivals, and artistic practices

should receive greater attention through educational and digital initiatives. Social media should be used as a supporting instrument that strengthens traditional cultural activities rather than replacing the communities and institutions responsible for maintaining them.

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