

Cite this article: S. Kumar, Social media as a tool for cultural preservation and cultural change, *RP World. Hist. Cult. Stud.* 4 (2025) 70–82.

Original Research Article

Social media as a tool for cultural preservation and cultural change

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 29 July 2025
Revised: 9 October 2025
Accepted: 10 October 2025
Published online: 16
October 2025

KEYWORDS

Social media; Cultural
preservation; Cultural
change; Digital heritage;
Cultural identity;
Globalization; Digital
communication;
Indigenous knowledge.

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the way societies create, preserve, disseminate, and reinterpret culture. Among these technologies, social media has emerged as one of the most influential platforms shaping cultural identities across local, national, and global contexts. Unlike traditional mass media, social media enables individuals and communities to actively participate in the production, preservation, and transmission of cultural knowledge rather than merely consuming information. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, WhatsApp, and region-specific applications have become virtual repositories of languages, rituals, customs, folklore, performing arts, traditional crafts, festivals, and indigenous knowledge systems. These platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for preserving endangered cultural heritage while simultaneously accelerating cultural diffusion and transformation.

However, the same technological innovations that facilitate cultural preservation also contribute significantly to cultural change. Continuous interaction among users from diverse backgrounds encourages hybridization of cultural practices, adoption of new lifestyles, linguistic transformations, changing value systems, and globalization of local traditions. While social media democratizes cultural participation, it also raises concerns regarding cultural homogenization, misinformation, digital colonialism, commercialization of heritage, and erosion of indigenous identities. Consequently, social media performs a dual role as both a guardian and an agent of cultural evolution.

This paper critically examines the multifaceted relationship between social media and culture by exploring its contributions to cultural preservation, cultural change, identity formation, community participation, education, heritage documentation, and digital activism. It further investigates emerging challenges, including algorithmic bias, digital inequalities, ethical issues, intellectual property concerns, and cultural commodification. Through theoretical discussion, global examples, and comparative analysis, the study demonstrates that social media should not be viewed solely as a disruptive force but rather as a dynamic socio-cultural ecosystem capable of strengthening cultural resilience when used responsibly. Finally, the paper proposes policy recommendations aimed at promoting inclusive, sustainable, and culturally sensitive digital environments that preserve cultural diversity while embracing constructive social transformation.

1. Introduction

Culture represents the collective identity of a society, encompassing its language, beliefs, customs, traditions, arts, literature, architecture, festivals, social values, and historical memory. It functions as a living system that evolves continuously while preserving the accumulated experiences of previous generations. Traditionally, cultural transmission occurred through oral traditions, family practices, religious institutions, educational systems, museums, libraries, archives, and community celebrations. Although these mechanisms remain important, the emergence of digital communication has transformed cultural exchange into a highly interactive and global phenomenon [1].

The twenty-first century has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of internet accessibility and mobile technologies. Social media platforms have become integral components of everyday life, connecting billions of users across geographical, linguistic, and political boundaries. Unlike traditional

broadcasting systems characterized by one-way communication, social media encourages participatory communication, allowing users to generate, modify, and distribute content in real time [2]. This participatory environment has significantly influenced cultural production, representation, and preservation.

One of the most remarkable contributions of social media lies in its ability to preserve cultural heritage digitally. Communities increasingly document traditional music, folk dances, oral histories, indigenous languages, culinary practices, religious ceremonies, handicrafts, and local festivals through photographs, videos, podcasts, blogs, and live streaming. Such digital documentation creates permanent archives accessible to global audiences, thereby safeguarding intangible cultural heritage against extinction [3]. Particularly for marginalized communities, digital platforms offer opportunities to represent



their own cultural narratives rather than relying exclusively on institutional interpretations.

Social media has also expanded opportunities for intercultural dialogue. Individuals from different countries interact daily through online communities, exchanging ideas, traditions, artistic expressions, and social experiences. This interaction encourages mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity while reducing geographical isolation. Educational institutions increasingly integrate social media into learning environments to expose students to multicultural perspectives and global citizenship [4].

At the same time, the widespread influence of social media has accelerated processes of cultural change. Continuous exposure to diverse lifestyles encourages adoption of new fashions, food habits, languages, entertainment preferences, political values, and consumption patterns. Younger generations frequently blend traditional customs with global popular culture, creating hybrid identities that combine local heritage with international influences [5]. Such transformations illustrate the dynamic nature of culture rather than its static preservation.

Globalization has intensified these processes considerably. International celebrities, influencers, multinational corporations, and digital content creators shape cultural trends that rapidly spread across national borders. Viral challenges, memes, music videos, and online campaigns often transcend linguistic barriers, creating shared digital cultures. Although such developments promote intercultural connectivity, they may also contribute to cultural homogenization by privileging dominant cultural narratives over local traditions [6].

Digital platforms further influence language usage. Numerous minority languages now find renewed visibility through online communities dedicated to language preservation, storytelling, and education. Simultaneously, widespread adoption of global languages, particularly English, affects linguistic diversity, sometimes reducing everyday usage of regional dialects [7]. Consequently, social media simultaneously strengthens and challenges linguistic heritage.

The role of social media during cultural festivals has become particularly significant. Festivals such as Diwali, Eid, Christmas, Lunar New Year, Navratri, Holi, Thanksgiving, and numerous indigenous celebrations receive extensive digital coverage through live broadcasts, interactive storytelling, and virtual participation. Individuals separated by geographical distance can actively engage in cultural events through online platforms, thereby strengthening emotional and cultural connections [8].

In addition to cultural celebrations, social media supports preservation of traditional knowledge systems. Farmers share indigenous agricultural practices, artisans demonstrate handicraft techniques, musicians archive folk compositions,

and elders narrate historical experiences using digital platforms. Such initiatives create valuable educational resources for younger generations while promoting sustainable cultural continuity [9].

Nevertheless, several challenges accompany these positive developments. Digital misinformation, manipulated historical narratives, cultural appropriation, commercialization of traditional practices, algorithm-driven content prioritization, privacy concerns, and unequal internet access present significant obstacles to responsible cultural preservation. Furthermore, platform algorithms often favor commercially attractive content rather than culturally significant material, limiting the visibility of less popular traditions [10].

Another emerging concern involves digital colonialism, where technological infrastructures developed primarily by multinational corporations influence cultural representation according to commercial priorities rather than community interests. Local cultures may become commodified for tourism, branding, or entertainment purposes without adequately respecting their historical and spiritual significance [11].

Despite these concerns, social media has fundamentally democratized cultural participation. Previously, preservation of cultural heritage depended largely upon governments, museums, universities, and media organizations. Today, ordinary citizens actively document family traditions, local histories, folk performances, traditional recipes, regional dialects, and community rituals using smartphones and internet platforms. This democratization has diversified cultural documentation while increasing public engagement with heritage preservation [12].

The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the transformative role of social media in maintaining cultural continuity. During lockdowns, museums organized virtual exhibitions, artists conducted online performances, educational institutions hosted digital cultural festivals, and religious organizations streamed ceremonies worldwide. These developments illustrated how digital technologies can sustain cultural life during periods of social disruption [13].

The present study explores both dimensions of social media—as a powerful instrument for preserving cultural heritage and as a catalyst for cultural transformation. By integrating perspectives from communication studies, sociology, anthropology, media studies, and cultural theory, the paper seeks to evaluate the opportunities and challenges associated with digital culture. Understanding these complex interactions is essential for policymakers, educators, cultural institutions, researchers, and technology developers striving to create inclusive digital ecosystems that preserve cultural diversity while encouraging innovation and intercultural dialogue.

Table 1: Major functions of social media in cultural development.

Function	Contribution to cultural preservation	Contribution to cultural change
Digital Documentation	Archives traditions, languages, folklore	Creates new digital cultural records
Global Communication	Promotes intercultural understanding	Accelerates cultural exchange
Community Participation	Encourages local engagement	Builds transnational communities
Education	Disseminates traditional knowledge	Introduces global perspectives
Entertainment	Preserves folk arts	Popularizes global media
Digital Activism	Protects endangered heritage	Supports social and cultural reforms

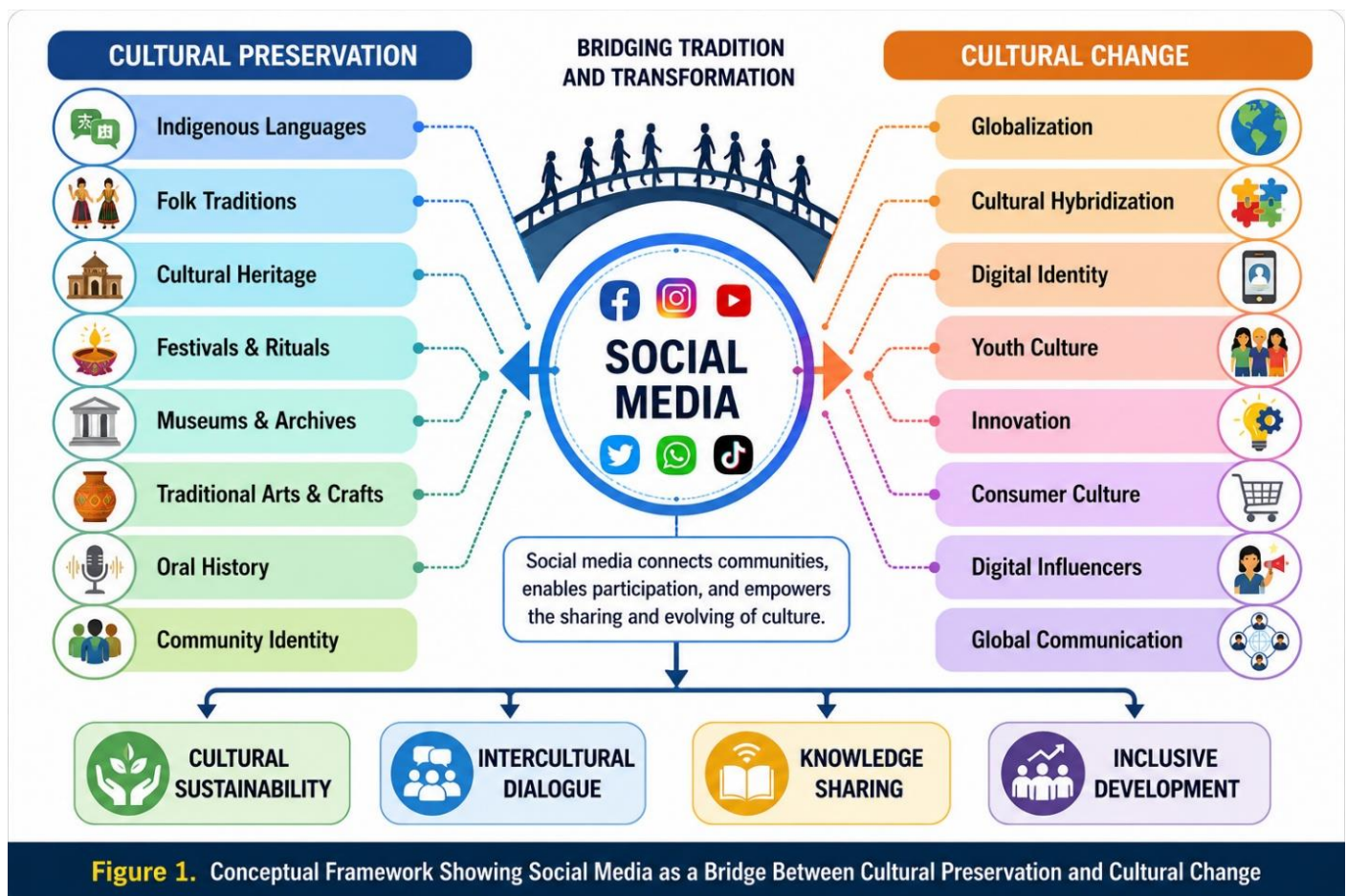


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing social media as a bridge between cultural preservation and cultural change.

2. Literature review

The relationship between communication technologies and culture has attracted sustained scholarly attention since the emergence of mass media. While early research focused on newspapers, radio, television, and cinema as instruments of cultural transmission, the advent of the Internet and social media has fundamentally reshaped theoretical and empirical discussions. Contemporary scholars increasingly recognize that social media is not merely a communication tool but also a participatory cultural ecosystem where individuals simultaneously act as consumers, creators, curators, and disseminators of cultural content [14].

2.1 Evolution of digital culture

The transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 marked a significant shift from passive information consumption to active user participation. Earlier digital platforms primarily functioned as repositories of information, whereas modern social networking platforms enable users to upload videos, publish blogs, create podcasts, share photographs, and engage in collaborative knowledge production. This transformation has democratized cultural expression by allowing communities to document and preserve their heritage independently of traditional media institutions [15].

Researchers argue that digital technologies have expanded the concept of cultural preservation beyond museums, archives, and libraries. Cultural heritage is increasingly stored in cloud-based repositories, multimedia platforms, digital exhibitions, and community-managed online archives. Consequently, preservation has become a continuous and

participatory process rather than an activity limited to governmental or academic institutions [16].

2.2 Social media and cultural identity

Cultural identity refers to the shared beliefs, customs, traditions, languages, symbols, and historical experiences that distinguish one community from another. Social media has significantly influenced identity construction by providing spaces where individuals negotiate their cultural affiliations while interacting with diverse global audiences [17].

Studies demonstrate that users frequently express their identities through language choices, photographs, clothing styles, religious practices, culinary traditions, music preferences, and participation in cultural celebrations. Hashtags, digital storytelling, online communities, and multimedia sharing have become important mechanisms through which people reaffirm their cultural belonging while introducing their heritage to wider audiences [18].

Diaspora communities particularly benefit from these digital interactions. Individuals living abroad maintain emotional, linguistic, and cultural connections with their countries of origin through regular participation in online cultural groups, virtual festivals, religious ceremonies, and language-learning communities. Such interactions strengthen transnational identities while reducing feelings of cultural displacement [19].

2.3 Social media and intangible cultural heritage

Intangible cultural heritage includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festivals, craftsmanship, folklore,

indigenous knowledge, and traditional ecological practices. Unlike tangible heritage, which consists of monuments and artifacts, intangible heritage depends upon continuous intergenerational transmission.

Researchers increasingly acknowledge that social media provides effective tools for documenting and preserving intangible heritage. Video-sharing platforms archive folk dances, storytelling sessions, traditional music, local dialects, indigenous medicinal knowledge, and craft-making techniques. Educational content creators produce tutorials that enable younger generations to learn traditional skills irrespective of geographical location [20].

Live-streaming technologies have further expanded opportunities for documenting cultural practices. Religious festivals, traditional weddings, harvest celebrations, and community rituals are now broadcast globally, allowing diaspora populations and international audiences to participate virtually. Such practices contribute significantly to cultural continuity in an increasingly mobile world [21].

2.4 Social media and globalization

Globalization has intensified intercultural communication by facilitating rapid movement of ideas, products, artistic expressions, and lifestyles across national borders. Social media functions as one of the primary mechanisms through which globalization operates.

Scholars identify both positive and negative consequences of this phenomenon. On one hand, digital connectivity promotes intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding, tourism, educational collaboration, and appreciation of cultural diversity. Exposure to different traditions encourages tolerance and broadens social perspectives [22].

Conversely, several researchers warn that globalization may accelerate cultural homogenization. Dominant cultures, supported by greater economic resources and technological infrastructure, often receive disproportionately higher visibility on global platforms. Consequently, minority languages, indigenous customs, and local artistic traditions may struggle to attract comparable digital attention [23].

The concept of "glocalization" has emerged as an alternative framework explaining how communities adapt global influences while preserving local identities. Rather than replacing traditional cultures entirely, globalization frequently encourages the creation of hybrid cultural expressions combining local traditions with international innovations [24].

2.5 Digital activism and cultural preservation

Recent scholarship emphasizes the growing role of social media in cultural activism. Community organizations, museums, educational institutions, indigenous groups, and non-governmental organizations increasingly employ digital campaigns to protect endangered languages, historical monuments, folk traditions, and ecological knowledge.

Online campaigns raise public awareness regarding heritage conservation, mobilize financial support through crowdfunding, encourage volunteer participation, and facilitate collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and local communities. During periods of political instability or natural disasters, digital documentation often preserves valuable cultural records that might otherwise be permanently lost [25].

3. Theoretical framework

Understanding the dual role of social media in preserving and transforming culture requires interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives drawn from sociology, anthropology, communication studies, media studies, and cultural studies.

1. Cultural Diffusion Theory: Cultural Diffusion Theory explains how ideas, beliefs, customs, technologies, and artistic practices spread from one society to another. Historically, diffusion occurred through migration, trade, exploration, and education. Social media has accelerated this process dramatically by enabling instantaneous global communication. Digital platforms facilitate the rapid circulation of music, fashion, cuisine, festivals, languages, and artistic innovations. Viral content often transcends geographical boundaries within hours, illustrating how digital technologies have transformed the mechanisms of cultural diffusion [26].

2. Media Ecology Theory: Media Ecology Theory proposes that communication technologies shape human perception, social organization, and cultural development. Rather than serving merely as neutral channels, media environments actively influence how societies think, learn, remember, and interact. Social media exemplifies this theory by restructuring interpersonal communication, community formation, political participation, educational practices, and cultural production. The architecture of digital platforms—including algorithms, recommendation systems, multimedia interfaces, and interactive communication—affects which cultural narratives receive visibility and public engagement [27].

3. Uses and Gratifications Theory: Uses and Gratifications Theory argues that audiences actively select media according to their individual needs rather than consuming content passively. Users engage with social media for information, entertainment, education, social interaction, identity formation, and cultural participation. Within cultural contexts, individuals intentionally follow pages related to traditional music, regional cuisine, indigenous languages, folk arts, historical documentaries, and religious practices. Consequently, users become active participants in preserving and disseminating cultural knowledge rather than passive recipients of media messages [28].

4. Social Construction of Reality: The Social Construction of Reality framework explains that reality is continuously created through social interaction. Culture evolves because communities collectively assign meanings to symbols, practices, traditions, and institutions. Social media has expanded this process by enabling millions of users to negotiate cultural meanings in real time. Online discussions influence public interpretations of historical events, festivals, social norms, national identity, and cultural values. Viral narratives often reshape collective memory and public discourse [29].

5. Network Society Theory: Network Society Theory emphasizes that modern societies are increasingly organized through digital communication networks rather than traditional hierarchical institutions. In network societies, cultural preservation no longer depends solely on governments, museums, or educational institutions. Individuals, influencers, local organizations, and online communities collectively contribute to documenting and transmitting cultural heritage. Decentralized communication significantly increases public participation while diversifying cultural representation [30].

6. Participatory Culture Theory: Participatory Culture Theory argues that digital environments encourage collaborative creativity, user-generated content, and shared knowledge production. Social media users regularly produce videos demonstrating traditional recipes, folk dances, local

crafts, historical narratives, language lessons, and cultural documentaries. Audiences further contribute by commenting, translating, remixing, and redistributing cultural content. Preservation therefore becomes a collaborative social process rather than an institutional responsibility alone [31].

Table 2: Major theories explaining the relationship between social media and culture.

Theory	Principal idea	Relevance to Cultural preservation	Relevance to cultural change
Cultural Diffusion Theory	Cultural elements spread across societies	Facilitates global awareness of heritage	Accelerates exchange of ideas and practices
Media Ecology Theory	Media shapes society and perception	Digital media preserves cultural memory	Media transforms social behavior
Uses and Gratifications Theory	Users actively select media	Individuals seek heritage-related content	Users adopt new cultural trends
Social Construction of Reality	Meanings emerge through interaction	Communities reinterpret traditions	Collective identities evolve online
Network Society Theory	Networks replace hierarchical communication	Communities archive heritage collaboratively	Digital networks accelerate innovation
Participatory Culture Theory	Users become creators	Citizen-generated cultural archives	Encourages creative reinterpretation

4. Social media as a tool for cultural preservation

The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the methods through which cultural heritage is documented, transmitted, and experienced. Traditionally, preservation depended on families, educational institutions, museums, libraries, and governmental organizations. Although these institutions remain indispensable, social media has democratized preservation by enabling ordinary citizens to actively record and share their cultural experiences. Today, individuals equipped with smartphones and internet connectivity can contribute to preserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, making preservation a participatory rather than exclusively institutional process [32].

Digital platforms provide opportunities for real-time documentation, long-term archiving, community engagement, and intercultural dialogue. Through multimedia formats—including photographs, videos, podcasts, blogs, and live broadcasts—communities can preserve historical memories, local traditions, folk arts, indigenous knowledge, and endangered languages for future generations.

4.1. Preservation of indigenous and regional languages

Language is one of the most important carriers of cultural identity. It embodies history, traditions, collective memory, folklore, literature, and indigenous knowledge. Unfortunately, globalization, urbanization, and migration have accelerated the decline of many regional and indigenous languages. Social media has emerged as an effective platform for reversing this trend by encouraging digital communication in native languages [33].

Individuals and cultural organizations increasingly create educational videos, online dictionaries, podcasts, storytelling sessions, grammar tutorials, and language-learning communities on digital platforms. Native speakers use Facebook groups, YouTube channels, WhatsApp communities, Instagram reels, and podcasts to teach pronunciation, vocabulary, idioms, and oral traditions.

Young users who may not regularly speak their ancestral language at home often reconnect with their linguistic heritage through digital media. Community-driven initiatives promote multilingual communication while encouraging inter-

generational dialogue between elders and younger members of society.

Artificial intelligence-based translation tools, subtitles, and automatic captioning have further increased accessibility to minority languages. These technological innovations facilitate language preservation while enabling wider global audiences to appreciate linguistic diversity [34].

4.2 Documentation of folk traditions and oral heritage

Many cultural traditions survive primarily through oral transmission. Folk songs, myths, legends, storytelling, proverbs, traditional medicinal practices, and local histories have historically been passed from one generation to another through direct interpersonal communication.

Social media significantly strengthens this transmission process by providing permanent digital records. Local historians, teachers, artists, elders, and community organizations now upload recordings of oral narratives that were previously vulnerable to disappearance.

Video-sharing platforms allow documentation of traditional storytelling, folk music, indigenous dances, puppet theatre, village rituals, oral epics, community celebrations, and traditional agricultural knowledge. These recordings become valuable educational resources for researchers, students, and future generations [35]. Digital preservation also reduces dependence upon physical archives, making cultural knowledge accessible to geographically dispersed communities.

4.3 Preservation of traditional arts and crafts

Traditional craftsmanship represents centuries of accumulated artistic knowledge. Handloom weaving, pottery, wood carving, metalwork, embroidery, miniature painting, bamboo crafts, tribal art, and textile traditions often face challenges from industrialization and declining market demand. Social media has revitalized many traditional occupations by providing artisans with direct access to national and international audiences.

Artisans now use digital platforms to demonstrate production techniques, explain cultural significance, promote handmade products, conduct online workshops, build customer

communities, and preserve endangered craftsmanship. Video tutorials documenting every stage of production serve as digital instructional materials for future artisans. Such documentation ensures that traditional skills remain available even if local apprenticeship systems weaken [36]. Digital marketplaces integrated with social media additionally improve artisans' economic sustainability, thereby encouraging continuation of traditional practices.

4.4 Festivals, rituals, and community celebrations

Festivals are among the most visible expressions of cultural identity. They strengthen social cohesion while transmitting religious beliefs, ethical values, artistic traditions, culinary practices, music, and dance. Social media has fundamentally changed how festivals are celebrated and documented.

Communities increasingly use digital platforms to broadcast religious ceremonies, share historical information, organize virtual celebrations, educate younger generations, connect diaspora populations, and promote intercultural understanding. During global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual celebrations ensured continuity of cultural traditions despite physical restrictions. Religious institutions streamed ceremonies online, museums organized virtual exhibitions, and cultural organizations conducted online performances, demonstrating the resilience of digital cultural preservation [37]. Hashtag campaigns also increase public awareness of local festivals that previously received limited media attention.

4.5 Museums, libraries, and digital heritage archives

Museums and libraries have increasingly adopted social media to complement traditional preservation methods.

Rather than serving only as physical repositories, cultural institutions now create interactive digital environments that encourage public participation. Examples include: virtual museum tours, historical documentaries, interactive exhibitions, digital manuscripts, artifact storytelling, curator interviews, educational podcasts, and online heritage workshops. Such initiatives expand public access to cultural resources irrespective of geographical location. Students, researchers, tourists, and educators benefit from permanent online availability of museum collections [38]. Crowdsourced heritage documentation further enriches institutional archives. Visitors contribute historical photographs, family documents, oral histories, and local memories that complement official collections.

4.6 Youth Participation in Cultural Preservation

Young people constitute the largest demographic group using social media, making them central actors in digital heritage preservation.

Earlier generations primarily consumed cultural knowledge through formal education and family traditions. Today's youth actively create digital cultural content. Examples include: recording grandparents' memories, producing documentaries, creating educational reels, publishing traditional recipes, uploading folk dance performances, sharing regional music, designing heritage infographics, and developing digital storytelling projects. Educational institutions increasingly incorporate social media into heritage education through project-based learning. Students document local monuments, interview community elders, create podcasts, and produce short films exploring regional history [39]. This participatory approach enhances historical awareness while strengthening emotional attachment to cultural heritage.

4.7 Role of digital communities

Online communities represent one of social media's greatest strengths for cultural preservation.

Unlike geographically restricted communities, digital communities connect individuals across continents who share common linguistic, ethnic, religious, or cultural backgrounds. These communities facilitate: exchange of historical information, preservation of family histories, collaborative genealogy, language practice, cultural mentoring, traditional recipe sharing, religious education, and community fundraising. Diaspora populations particularly benefit from these networks by maintaining continuous interaction with their cultural heritage despite physical separation from their homeland [40].

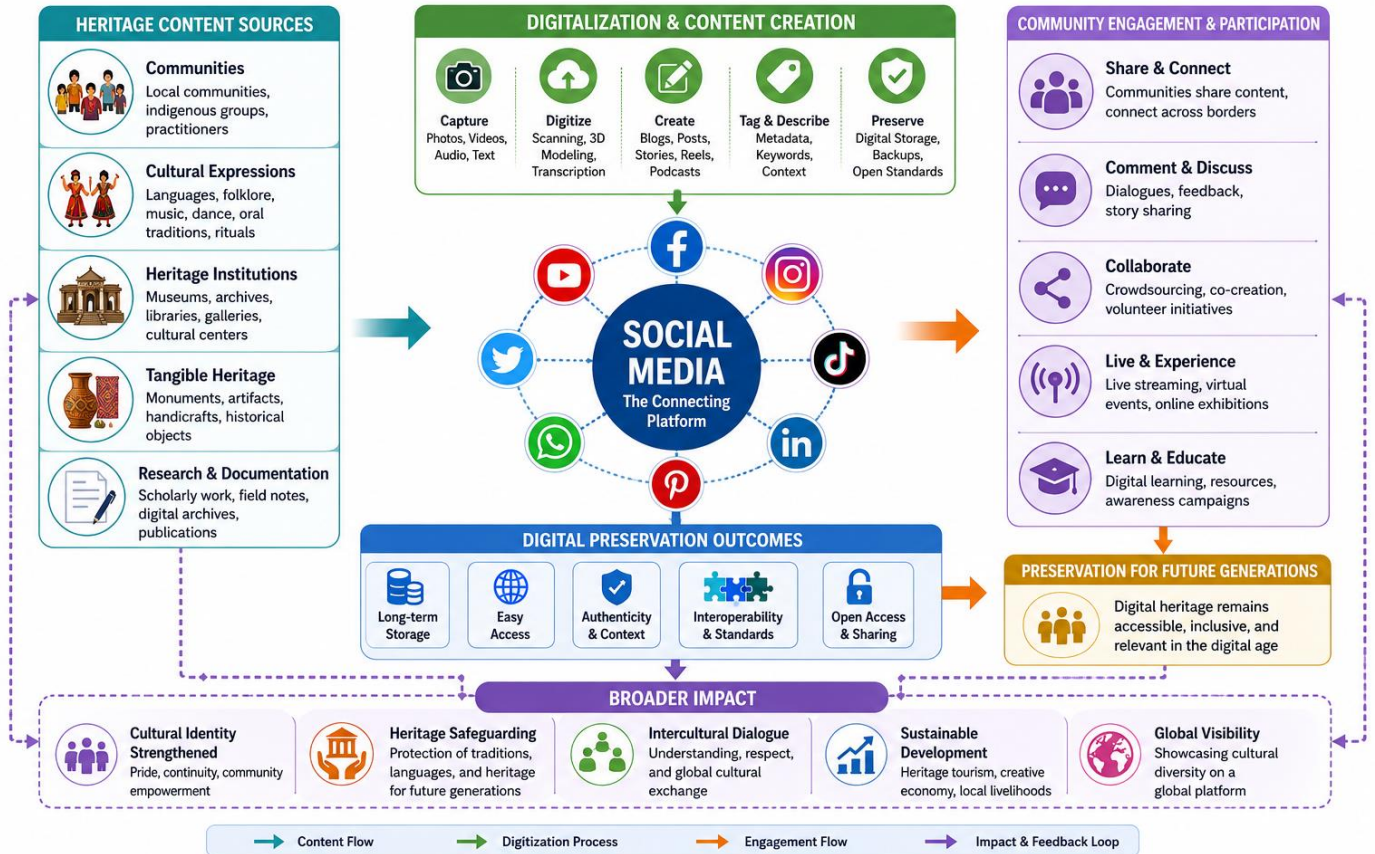
4.8 Social media during cultural emergencies

Natural disasters, armed conflicts, pandemics, and political instability frequently threaten cultural heritage.

Social media contributes to emergency preservation through: rapid documentation of endangered heritage, digital archiving of damaged monuments, community awareness campaigns, crowdfunding restoration efforts, volunteer mobilization, and international collaboration. When physical heritage sites are destroyed, digital records often become invaluable historical evidence for future restoration projects [41].

Table 3: Contributions of social media to cultural preservation.

Area of preservation	Social media contribution	Long-term cultural impact
Indigenous Languages	Online learning communities, podcasts, digital dictionaries	Revitalization of endangered languages
Folk Traditions	Video documentation and storytelling	Permanent digital archives
Arts and Crafts	Tutorials, live demonstrations, online marketing	Economic sustainability of artisans
Festivals	Live streaming and digital campaigns	Increased global participation
Museums	Virtual exhibitions and online collections	Wider educational access
Education	Student heritage projects	Youth engagement in preservation
Diaspora Communities	Online cultural groups	Strengthened transnational identity
Historical Documentation	Crowdsourced archives	Preservation of collective memory

Figure 2: Digital Ecosystem of Cultural Preservation through Social Media**Figure 2:** Digital ecosystem of cultural preservation through social media.

5. Social media as an agent of cultural change

Culture is inherently dynamic. Throughout history, societies have continuously adapted to new technologies, economic systems, political developments, and intercultural interactions. In the twenty-first century, social media has emerged as one of the most influential drivers of cultural transformation. Unlike traditional media, which primarily disseminated information in a one-way direction, social media enables users to actively create, modify, share, and reinterpret cultural content. Consequently, cultural change now occurs more rapidly, interactively, and globally than ever before [46].

Digital platforms have transformed how people communicate, celebrate traditions, construct identities, consume information, and participate in public discourse. While these developments promote creativity, innovation, and intercultural understanding, they also introduce challenges related to cultural homogenization, commercialization, misinformation, and the erosion of traditional practices.

5.1 Globalization and cultural hybridization

Globalization has significantly intensified cultural interaction across geographical boundaries. Social media acts as a catalyst for this process by enabling instantaneous communication among individuals from different linguistic, ethnic, and national backgrounds.

Users are regularly exposed to diverse traditions, cuisines, fashions, music, literature, and lifestyles through digital platforms. Such interactions encourage the blending of local and global cultural elements, producing what scholars describe as cultural hybridization [47].

Examples include:

- Fusion music combining traditional instruments with electronic sounds.
- Contemporary fashion integrating indigenous textiles with international designs.
- Digital art inspired by both local folklore and global aesthetics.
- Culinary innovations blending regional recipes with international ingredients.

Rather than eliminating traditional culture, social media often encourages creative reinterpretation that appeals to younger generations while preserving cultural roots.

5.2 Changing lifestyles and youth culture

Young people represent the largest demographic group using social networking platforms, making them the principal agents of digital cultural transformation.

Daily exposure to international entertainment, educational content, fashion trends, travel experiences, and technological innovations significantly influences: clothing styles, communication patterns, food preferences, leisure activities, career aspirations, social relationships, political awareness, and environmental consciousness. Digital influencers frequently shape public opinion regarding lifestyle choices. Short-form videos, live streams, podcasts, and interactive discussions introduce new perspectives that rapidly diffuse across societies [48]. Although such exposure broadens worldviews and encourages innovation, it may simultaneously reduce participation in traditional cultural practices if younger

generations increasingly prioritize global popular culture over local heritage.

5.3 Transformation of communication and language

Language continuously evolves through social interaction. Social media has accelerated linguistic change by introducing new vocabulary, abbreviations, emojis, internet slang, and multilingual communication.

Digital conversations increasingly incorporate: acronyms, memes, GIFs, visual symbols, hashtags, and hybrid language expressions. For example, bilingual and multilingual users frequently combine local languages with English in everyday communication, creating new linguistic forms commonly referred to as "code-mixing" or "code-switching" [49]. While such linguistic creativity enhances communication efficiency and inclusivity, excessive dependence on dominant global languages may reduce the everyday use of minority languages and regional dialects.

5.4 Consumer culture and digital marketing

Social media has fundamentally transformed consumer behavior. Businesses increasingly employ digital platforms to market products by integrating cultural symbols, festivals, traditions, and local identities into advertising campaigns.

Influencer marketing, personalized advertising, and algorithm-driven recommendations shape consumption patterns across diverse cultural contexts [50].

Positive outcomes include: promotion of traditional handicrafts, expansion of local entrepreneurship, global visibility for indigenous products, and increased tourism. However, commercialization may also commodify cultural traditions by reducing sacred or historically significant practices to marketable products designed primarily for entertainment or profit. The balance between economic development and cultural authenticity therefore remains an important policy consideration.

5.5 Digital influencers and cultural representation

Influencers have emerged as significant cultural intermediaries.

Unlike traditional celebrities whose influence depended upon television or cinema, digital creators directly engage audiences through continuous interaction.

Many influencers successfully promote: traditional cuisine, folk music, indigenous clothing, local tourism, historical education, language learning, and cultural storytelling. Others introduce global trends that rapidly reshape public preferences regarding fashion, beauty standards, entertainment, and social values [51]. Consequently, influencers possess considerable responsibility in representing cultures accurately, respectfully, and ethically.

5.6 Social media and social movements

Hashtag campaigns, online petitions, live broadcasts, and citizen journalism have enabled communities to mobilize rapidly around issues affecting cultural rights, heritage conservation, gender equality, indigenous identity, environmental protection, and social justice.

Examples include campaigns advocating: protection of endangered monuments, recognition of indigenous communities, preservation of traditional languages, cultural

diversity, women's participation in cultural institutions, and community-based heritage conservation. Social media therefore functions not only as a communication platform but also as an instrument of democratic participation and cultural advocacy [52].

5.7 Identity Formation in Digital Spaces

Identity formation increasingly occurs within online environments. Individuals express themselves through: profile photographs, digital biographies, language preferences, cultural symbols, religious expressions, artistic creations, and community memberships. Digital identities often combine multiple cultural influences simultaneously. For instance, an individual may celebrate regional festivals, communicate in multiple languages, enjoy international music, and participate in global environmental campaigns—all within the same digital ecosystem. Such multidimensional identities illustrate the emergence of global citizenship without necessarily abandoning local cultural affiliations [53].

5.8 Positive Dimensions of Cultural Change

Social media contributes positively to cultural evolution in several ways:

- 1. Innovation:** Digital creativity encourages reinterpretation of traditional arts while making them relevant to contemporary audiences.
- 2. Inclusivity:** Marginalized communities gain opportunities to represent their own histories and identities.
- 3. Intercultural Dialogue:** Cross-cultural communication reduces stereotypes and promotes mutual understanding.
- 4. Educational Accessibility:** Digital platforms provide free educational resources concerning history, languages, literature, archaeology, and cultural studies.
- 5. Democratization:** Citizens actively contribute to cultural documentation rather than depending solely upon governmental institutions [54].

5.9 Challenges associated with cultural change

Despite its many advantages, social media also presents significant cultural challenges.

- 1. Cultural Homogenization:** Dominant global cultures often receive greater algorithmic visibility than local traditions, potentially reducing cultural diversity [55].
- 2. Misinformation:** Incorrect historical narratives, manipulated images, fabricated traditions, and misleading cultural interpretations spread rapidly through digital networks.
- 3. Cultural Appropriation:** Traditional symbols, clothing, music, rituals, and indigenous knowledge may be commercialized without appropriate recognition or respect for originating communities [56].
- 4. Algorithmic Bias:** Recommendation algorithms frequently prioritize sensational or commercially profitable content over culturally valuable educational material.
- 5. Digital Divide:** Unequal internet access prevents many rural, economically disadvantaged, and indigenous communities from participating fully in digital cultural preservation [57].
- 6. Privacy and Intellectual Property:** Unauthorized recording and redistribution of cultural performances raise ethical concerns regarding ownership, consent, and community rights over traditional knowledge [58].

Table 4: Positive and negative cultural impacts of social media.

Positive cultural changes	Negative cultural challenges
Global cultural exchange	Cultural homogenization
Increased creativity	Commercialization of heritage
Educational accessibility	Misinformation
Promotion of cultural diversity	Cultural appropriation
Youth participation	Decline of traditional practices
Citizen journalism	Privacy concerns
Community networking	Algorithmic bias
Economic opportunities for artisans	Digital inequality

5.10 Balancing preservation and change

The relationship between preservation and change should not be understood as contradictory.

Healthy societies preserve their cultural foundations while adapting to changing social, technological, and economic environments.

Social media demonstrates this balance by simultaneously: preserving historical memory; encouraging innovation; connecting global communities; supporting democratic participation; promoting educational accessibility; and creating new forms of artistic expression.

The challenge lies not in preventing cultural change but in ensuring that transformation remains inclusive, ethical, culturally sensitive, and respectful of historical continuity [59].

Governments, educators, technology companies, cultural organizations, and citizens must collaborate to develop policies that protect cultural diversity while embracing responsible digital innovation [60].

6. Comparative case studies

Comparative case studies demonstrate that the impact of social media on culture varies according to technological infrastructure, government policies, community participation, and levels of digital literacy. While some societies primarily utilize social media for heritage conservation, others emphasize creative adaptation and innovation. Examining diverse contexts illustrates that digital platforms can simultaneously preserve cultural traditions and facilitate cultural transformation [61].

6.1 India: Digital revival of cultural diversity

India possesses one of the world's richest repositories of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including numerous languages, festivals, performing arts, crafts, and indigenous knowledge systems. Social media has become an effective instrument for documenting and promoting this diversity.

Government agencies, museums, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and private creators increasingly use digital platforms to: Livestream festivals and religious ceremonies; Archive classical and folk music performances; Promote traditional dance forms; Showcase handicrafts through digital marketplaces; Teach Sanskrit and regional languages; and Document oral histories and folklore.

6.2 Indigenous communities in North America

Many Indigenous communities have adopted social media to preserve endangered languages, oral traditions, ecological knowledge, and ceremonial practices.

Digital storytelling projects enable elders to record myths, legends, songs, and historical experiences for younger generations. Community-managed online archives strengthen

cultural continuity while respecting traditional knowledge systems.

Language revitalization initiatives employ podcasts, mobile applications, video lessons, and social networking groups to encourage everyday use of Indigenous languages. These efforts demonstrate that digital technologies can support cultural resilience without replacing traditional methods of learning [63].

6.3 East Asia: Integrating heritage with technology

Countries in East Asia have successfully combined advanced digital technologies with cultural preservation.

Museums increasingly provide: Virtual exhibitions; Augmented reality experiences; Interactive heritage education; Online archival collections; and Digital reconstructions of historical monuments.

Social media campaigns also promote traditional festivals, tea ceremonies, calligraphy, martial arts, and performing arts to international audiences.

These initiatives illustrate how technological innovation can strengthen public engagement with cultural heritage while attracting younger audiences [64].

6.4 Africa: Digital documentation of oral traditions

Many African societies possess rich oral traditions that historically depended upon community elders.

Social media now facilitates recording of folk tales, indigenous music, traditional medicine, community ceremonies, historical narratives, and local languages.

Digital documentation has become particularly important where urbanization and migration threaten intergenerational transmission.

Community radio stations increasingly integrate social media with traditional broadcasting, expanding participation while preserving cultural authenticity [65].

6.5 Lessons from comparative experiences

Across diverse cultural contexts, several common patterns emerge:

- Community participation is more effective than purely institutional preservation.
- Youth engagement strengthens long-term sustainability.
- Digital technologies complement rather than replace traditional practices.
- Partnerships among governments, educational institutions, and civil society improve outcomes.
- Digital literacy significantly influences the quality of cultural preservation.

These findings suggest that successful digital preservation depends upon collaboration among multiple stakeholders rather than technological infrastructure alone [66].

7. Challenges and Future Prospects

Although social media has transformed cultural preservation and exchange, several significant challenges remain.

1. Digital inequality: Unequal access to internet connectivity, smartphones, and digital education limits participation by rural, economically disadvantaged, and marginalized communities. Without inclusive digital infrastructure, cultural preservation initiatives risk disproportionately representing urban populations while excluding vulnerable cultural groups [67].

2. Algorithmic visibility: Recommendation algorithms determine which content receives public attention. Commercially attractive entertainment often receives greater visibility than educational or heritage-related content. Consequently, valuable cultural materials may remain underrepresented despite their historical significance [68].

3. Authenticity and misinformation: The absence of editorial oversight enables inaccurate representations of history, religion, folklore, and cultural traditions to spread rapidly. Manipulated images, fabricated historical narratives, and misleading interpretations may distort public understanding of cultural heritage. Fact-checking initiatives, expert collaboration, and digital literacy education are therefore increasingly important [69].

4. Intellectual property and cultural rights: Traditional knowledge belongs collectively to communities rather than individual creators. Unauthorized commercial use of indigenous music, handicrafts, medicinal knowledge, rituals, and artistic expressions raises ethical and legal concerns. Future digital governance must strengthen mechanisms protecting community ownership while encouraging responsible cultural sharing [70].

5. Artificial intelligence and cultural heritage: Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers significant opportunities for future preservation. Emerging applications include: (i) Automatic language translation; (ii) Restoration of historical photographs; (iii) Digital reconstruction of monuments; (iv) Intelligent archival systems; (v) Speech recognition for endangered languages; and (vi) Personalized heritage education. However, AI-generated cultural content also requires careful verification to prevent historical inaccuracies and cultural misrepresentation [71].

6 Virtual reality and immersive heritage: Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and Mixed Reality (MR) are expected to transform cultural education. Future generations may experience: (i) Interactive museum visits; (ii) Virtual archaeological sites; (iii) Immersive historical simulations; (iv) Digital heritage classrooms; and (v) Three-dimensional cultural storytelling. These technologies have considerable potential to increase accessibility while preserving fragile historical sites [72].

8. Policy Recommendations

Maximizing the benefits of social media while minimizing cultural risks requires coordinated action involving governments, educational institutions, technology companies, cultural organizations, and citizens.

1. Strengthen digital documentation: Governments and cultural institutions should establish comprehensive national digital heritage repositories documenting languages, folklore, rituals, music, crafts, and oral histories.

2. Promote digital literacy: Educational curricula should include responsible social media use, cultural ethics, fact verification, copyright awareness, and digital citizenship. Digital literacy enables users to distinguish authentic cultural information from misinformation.

3. Support indigenous communities: Policies should prioritize community-led documentation initiatives that respect traditional knowledge systems and cultural ownership. Financial assistance, technological infrastructure, and capacity-building programs can empower marginalized communities.

4. Encourage responsible platform governance: Technology companies should improve algorithmic transparency while promoting educational and heritage-related content. Greater collaboration with cultural organizations can improve representation of minority cultures.

5. Foster international collaboration: International organizations, universities, museums, archives, and civil society organizations should collaborate to preserve endangered cultural heritage through shared digital repositories and research initiatives.

6. Strengthen intellectual property protection: Legal frameworks should recognize collective ownership of traditional cultural expressions and prevent unauthorized commercial exploitation.

7. Promote youth participation: Governments and educational institutions should encourage students to document local heritage through digital storytelling, podcasts, short documentaries, oral history projects, and community archives. Youth participation ensures intergenerational continuity.

Table 5: Strategies for balancing cultural preservation and cultural change.

Stakeholder	Recommended strategy	Expected outcome
Governments	National digital heritage policies	Sustainable preservation
Educational Institutions	Digital heritage education	Increased cultural awareness
Technology Companies	Ethical algorithms and transparency	Better cultural representation
Museums and Archives	Virtual collections and interactive exhibitions	Wider accessibility
Indigenous Communities	Community-led documentation	Protection of traditional knowledge
Researchers	Interdisciplinary collaboration	Improved cultural scholarship
Citizens	Responsible content creation	Authentic cultural representation
International Organizations	Global partnerships	Preservation of world cultural diversity

9. Discussion

The comparative evidence presented throughout this paper demonstrates that social media functions simultaneously as an

archive, classroom, marketplace, communication network, and arena for cultural negotiation. Its significance extends beyond technological innovation because it reshapes the mechanisms

through which cultural knowledge is created, preserved, transmitted, and transformed.

Rather than viewing cultural preservation and cultural change as opposing processes, contemporary scholarship increasingly recognizes them as complementary dimensions of cultural evolution. Social media enables societies to preserve historical continuity while adapting to changing technological and social environments.

Successful cultural preservation therefore depends upon maintaining a dynamic balance between safeguarding heritage and encouraging innovation. Inclusive governance, ethical technology design, community participation, and digital literacy constitute essential foundations for achieving this balance [73–75].

10. Conclusion

The emergence of social media has fundamentally transformed the relationship between technology and culture. What began as a medium for interpersonal communication has evolved into a comprehensive digital ecosystem that influences cultural preservation, knowledge dissemination, identity formation, public participation, and social transformation. This paper has demonstrated that social media performs a dual role: it serves both as an effective instrument for preserving cultural heritage and as a powerful catalyst for cultural change. These two functions are not contradictory but complementary, reflecting the dynamic nature of culture in the digital age.

One of the most significant contributions of social media is its democratization of cultural preservation. Unlike traditional preservation systems that relied primarily on governments, museums, libraries, archives, and academic institutions, digital platforms empower ordinary citizens to become active participants in documenting and transmitting cultural heritage. Through photographs, videos, podcasts, blogs, live-streaming, and online communities, individuals preserve languages, oral traditions, folk music, handicrafts, rituals, festivals, and indigenous knowledge. Such participatory documentation enriches collective memory and ensures that cultural expressions remain accessible to future generations regardless of geographical boundaries.

The paper has further shown that social media strengthens intercultural dialogue by facilitating communication among diverse communities. Global connectivity enables individuals to exchange traditions, artistic expressions, historical experiences, and educational resources with unprecedented speed. This interaction promotes mutual understanding, encourages respect for cultural diversity, and creates opportunities for collaborative learning. Diaspora communities, in particular, benefit from digital platforms by maintaining linguistic, emotional, and cultural ties with their countries of origin, thereby reinforcing transnational cultural identities.

At the same time, social media significantly accelerates cultural transformation. Continuous exposure to global lifestyles, entertainment, languages, consumer practices, and political ideas reshapes values and social behavior, especially among younger generations. Digital environments encourage innovation, cultural hybridization, and creative reinterpretation of traditional practices. These developments illustrate that culture is not static but continually evolves in response to technological, economic, and social changes. Rather than replacing traditional culture, social media often facilitates the

emergence of hybrid cultural forms that integrate local heritage with global influences.

Despite these positive contributions, the study also identifies several challenges associated with digital cultural ecosystems. Cultural homogenization, misinformation, commercialization of heritage, algorithmic bias, digital inequality, privacy concerns, and unauthorized use of traditional knowledge pose serious threats to cultural authenticity and diversity. Commercial platform algorithms frequently prioritize sensational or market-driven content, limiting the visibility of minority cultures and educational heritage resources. Similarly, unequal access to digital technologies prevents many marginalized communities from participating fully in online cultural preservation initiatives.

The analysis indicates that effective cultural preservation cannot depend solely on technological innovation. Sustainable preservation requires collaboration among governments, educational institutions, cultural organizations, technology companies, researchers, local communities, and individual citizens. Digital literacy, ethical platform governance, intellectual property protection, community-led documentation, and inclusive public policies are essential for ensuring that technological advancement strengthens rather than weakens cultural diversity.

Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), cloud computing, and digital archiving systems offer promising opportunities for future cultural preservation. AI-assisted language revitalization, intelligent heritage databases, immersive museum experiences, and virtual reconstructions of historical sites can significantly enhance cultural education and accessibility. However, these technologies must be implemented responsibly to prevent historical inaccuracies, cultural misrepresentation, and algorithmic discrimination.

The findings of this study therefore suggest that the future of cultural preservation lies in maintaining a balanced relationship between continuity and change. Social media should not be perceived merely as a disruptive technological force but as a transformative cultural infrastructure capable of preserving historical memory while encouraging innovation, creativity, and intercultural cooperation. Policies that promote digital inclusion, community participation, ethical technology development, and respect for cultural rights will enable societies to harness the full potential of social media for sustainable cultural development.

In conclusion, social media has become one of the defining cultural institutions of the twenty-first century. Its influence extends beyond communication, reshaping the ways societies remember their past, experience their present, and imagine their future. By integrating responsible technological innovation with community-centered cultural preservation strategies, social media can continue to serve as a bridge between tradition and modernity, ensuring that cultural heritage remains a living, evolving, and inclusive resource for generations to come.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the contributions of researchers, cultural practitioners, educational institutions, and digital communities whose scholarly work and practical initiatives have advanced understanding of the relationship between social media and cultural heritage. Their collective efforts have

provided valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with digital cultural preservation.

Author contributions

The author solely conceived the study, reviewed the literature, analyzed the available evidence, interpreted the findings, and prepared the manuscript.

Funding

The author declares that no specific funding was received for the preparation of this manuscript.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data availability statement

No primary datasets were generated or analyzed during the preparation of this manuscript.

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