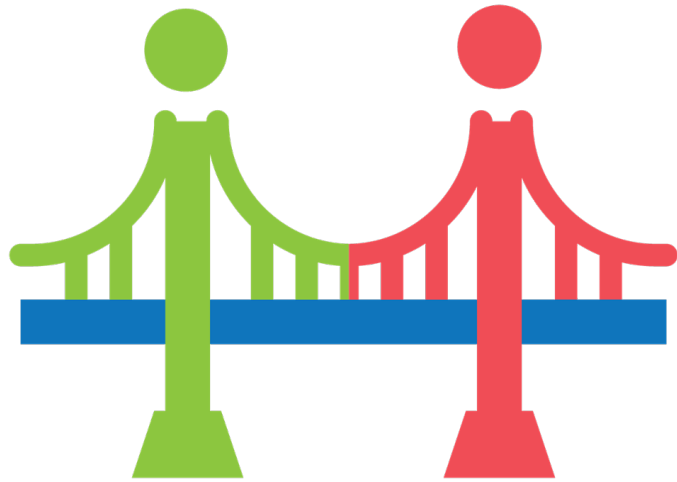




CULTURAL BRIDGES



# CULTURAL BRIDGES

Engaging Young People and Youth Workers to develop their Cultural Intelligence for Diverse Online Communities

## Promoting Cultural Intelligence Online – promoting cultural intelligence through social media



# Learning objectives

- ✓ Understand the potential of social media platforms for promoting cultural intelligence and intercultural understanding.
  - ✓ Gain insight into both the positive and negative impacts social media has on cultural awareness, understanding, and the development of cultural knowledge.
  - ✓ Learn effective strategies and tools for sharing cultural knowledge and experiences online, while recognising the role of digital platforms in empowering marginalised communities.
  - ✓ Embrace social media as a tool to promote empathy, respect and understanding across cultures.
- 





# Key concepts

**SOCIAL MEDIA** - Social media is a channel that is provided by social media platforms which offer advanced features as well as functions which support social networking such as sharing ideas, information, knowledge and so forth over a network.

**SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM** - online platforms and tools that allow people to create, share and exchange information and content with others. Examples of social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok.

The term “**CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**” embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and the natural environment.



# Key concepts

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY** – the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used.

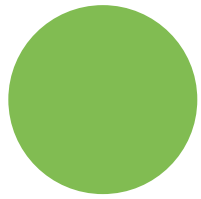
**CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS** – those expressions that result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies, and that have cultural content.

# Social Media as a Cultural Landscape

Social media has a dual nature that depends largely on how it is used. When used thoughtfully and responsibly, it can be a powerful tool for promoting cultural awareness, encouraging open dialogue and promoting appreciation for diversity. It can allow people from different backgrounds to connect, share experiences and learn about one another in ways that were previously impossible. This can lead to greater understanding and acceptance of differences across cultures.

However, risks still remain if social media is used irresponsibly or without mindfulness. Unethical behaviour, such as spreading misinformation, promoting biased content or engaging in harmful conversations, can reinforce negative stereotypes and deepen divisions between groups. The anonymity and fast pace of social media can sometimes encourage careless or harmful behaviour, further contributing to social tensions. Ultimately, the impact of social media on cultural awareness and unity depends on the intent and responsibility with which it is used.





# Social Media Platforms

Each social media platform operates in a unique manner because of the algorithms which determine which content is shown to users based on different criteria. In addition, by providing tools for communication, community building and cultural expression, these platforms enable users to share **their cultural heritage**, **engage in cross-cultural dialogue** and participate in **global conversations**. Most common social media platforms:



- Broad audience (teenagers to grandparents).
- Users share photos, videos, updates and engage in discussions. Focused on written content more.
- Features like groups, pages and events as well as automatic translator encourage the exchange of cultural practices, traditions and languages, promoting community engagement both online and offline.



- Besides general audience, celebrities, politicians and activists use X to amplify their voices.
- Users share photos, videos, updates and engage in discussions. Focused on written content more.
- Trending topics, which are highlighted through hashtags, reflect global and local issues and events, enabling users to engage with current cultural discussion in real-time.



- Besides general audience, celebrities, influencers, artists, brands, communities, etc.
- Content revolves around photos and short videos that depict cultural practices, fashion, art and daily lives, offering a window into different cultures
- Use of visual storytelling to promote cross-cultural understanding and challenge stereotypes.



- Besides general audience, celebrities, influencers, artists, brands, etc.
- Users share short-form videos set to music, encourage creative expression.
- Users can share dances, music, challenges and trends that often go viral as a mean to reach people regardless of their age encouraging them to participate in cultural diversity.

APR  
2024

# OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

HEADLINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA ADOPTION AND USE (NOTE: USER IDENTITIES MAY NOT REPRESENT UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS)



NUMBER OF SOCIAL  
MEDIA USER IDENTITIES



**5.07**  
BILLION

QUARTER-ON-QUARTER CHANGE  
IN SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES



**+0.7%**  
**+37 MILLION**

YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE IN  
SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES



**+5.4%**  
**+259 MILLION**

AVERAGE DAILY TIME SPENT  
USING SOCIAL MEDIA



**2H 20M**  
YOY: **-2.7%** (-4 MINS)

AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL  
PLATFORMS USED EACH MONTH



**6.7**  
YOY: **+1.5%** (+0.1)

SOCIAL MEDIA  
USER IDENTITIES vs.  
TOTAL POPULATION



**62.6%**

SOCIAL MEDIA USER  
IDENTITIES AGED 18+ vs.  
POPULATION AGED 18+



**84.3%**

SOCIAL MEDIA USER  
IDENTITIES vs. INDIVIDUALS  
USING THE INTERNET



**93.3%**

FEMALE SOCIAL MEDIA USER  
IDENTITIES vs. TOTAL SOCIAL  
MEDIA USER IDENTITIES



**46.6%**

MALE SOCIAL MEDIA USER  
IDENTITIES vs. TOTAL SOCIAL  
MEDIA USER IDENTITIES



**53.4%**

**SOURCES:** KEPIOS ANALYSIS; COMPANY ADVERTISING RESOURCES; CNNIC; BETA RESEARCH CENTER; OCDH; U.N.; GWI (Q4 2023). **NOTE:** AVERAGE NUMBER OF PLATFORMS INCLUDES DATA FOR YOUTUBE. **ADVISORY:** SOCIAL MEDIA USER IDENTITIES MAY NOT REPRESENT UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS. COMPARISONS WITH POPULATION AND INTERNET USERS MAY EXCEED 100% DUE TO DUPLICATE AND FAKE ACCOUNTS, USER AGE MISSTATEMENTS, DIFFERENT REPORTING PERIODS, AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CENSUS COUNTS AND RESIDENT POPULATIONS. **COMPARABILITY:** SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY CHANGES; BASE REVISIONS. SEE [NOTES ON DATA](#).

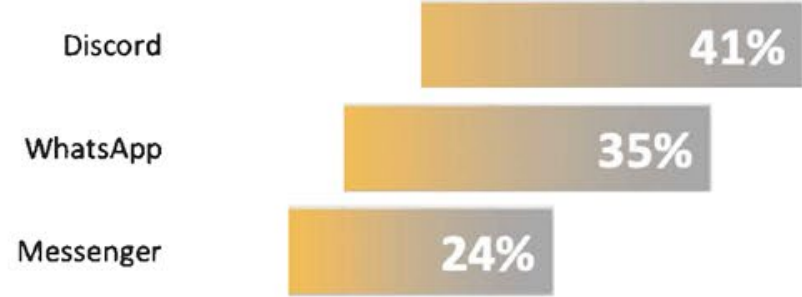
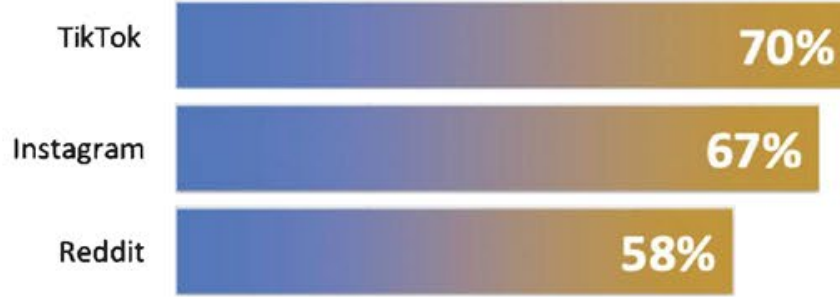
# % REACH OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY AGE GROUP INCLUSIVE OF WEB AND APP

## SOCIAL NETWORKS

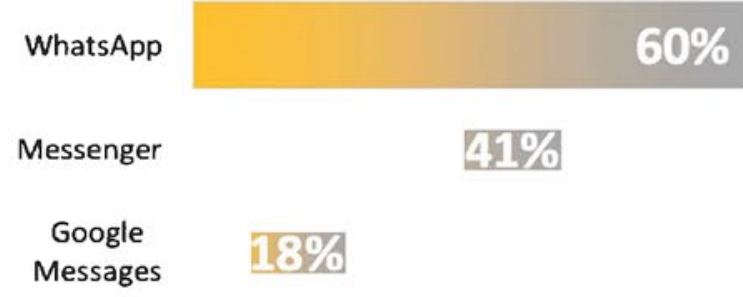
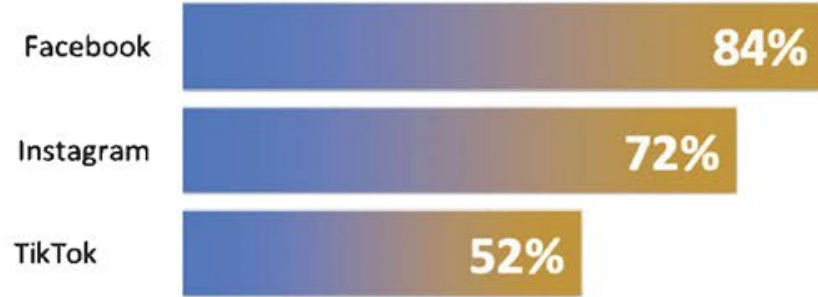
## INSTANT MESSAGERS



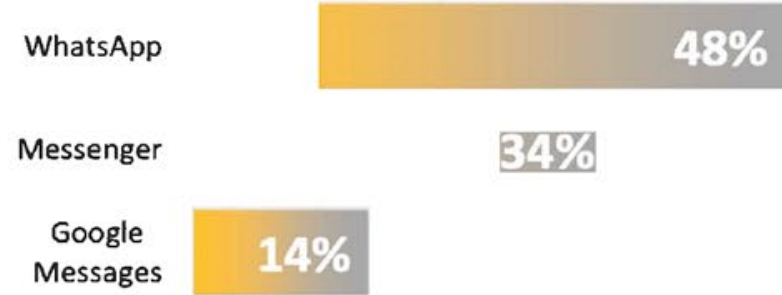
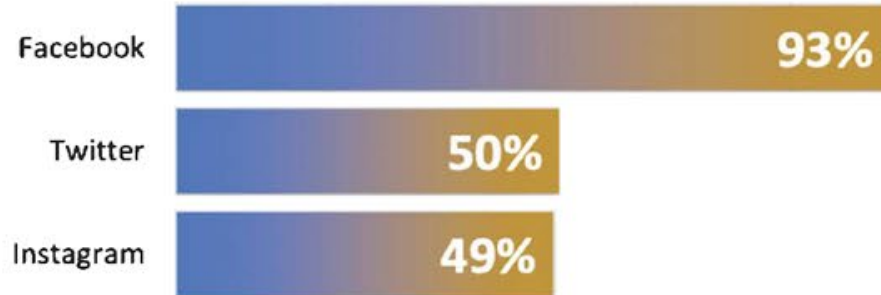
**GEN Z**  
18-24



**MILLENNIALS**  
25-34



**GEN X**  
35+



Source: Comscore

# Social Media as an expression of cultural values, norms and behaviours

Social media platforms have revolutionised the way we share our lives and habits, significantly impacting our social norms and cultural practices. However, the usage of social media and the choices for the social media platforms varies widely across different regions due to cultural, linguistic, and regulatory factors. Some regions have unique social media platforms tailored to their specific cultural and social needs.

For example:

- Mixi, a popular social networking service in Japan, contrasts sharply with Facebook. Mixi's membership is by invitation only, users must be over 15 years old and possess a Japanese email address. This exclusivity and emphasis on privacy reflect Japanese cultural values that prioritise privacy and cautious sharing of personal information.
- In contrast, Facebook encourages openness and broad social connectivity, allowing users to share extensive personal information and connect with a large network of acquaintances. This openness aligns more closely with American cultural values of transparency and social networking.





## Culture expressions online

Interactive technologies have revolutionised how we express culture. Online platforms allow us to share different types of content, shaping our identities and co-creating cultural narratives. Some examples include ->



### HASHTAGS

Hashtags have a power to raise voices, encourage a sense of community, and drive social change, e.g. #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo.



### MEMES

Memes are online cultural objects that express opinions and emotions, crossing language barriers and promoting a sense of belonging among Internet users.



### MULTILINGUALISM AND CODE-SWITCHING

Switching between languages when posting online (code-switching within single conversation) showcases cultural fluidity and the blending of linguistic identities.

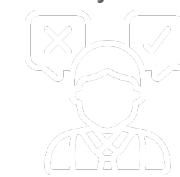
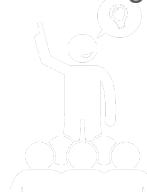


### DIGITAL ART

Digital artists use platforms like Instagram and DeviantArt to share their cultural heritage, promoting collaboration and cultural blending.

# Social Media tools to promote Cultural Intelligence (1)

Social media platforms provide a variety of tools that allow for intercultural communication and help promote intercultural understanding. These tools make it easier for individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect, share and engage in meaningful conversations. Here are some of the key social media tools that facilitate intercultural communication and understanding:



## GLOBAL COMMUNITIES & GROUPS

- Facebook Groups, Reddit Communities, WhatsApp/Telegram Groups and others bring people together based on shared interests, including cultural topics. These spaces allow for discussions on traditions, history, language and cultural practices, helping users to learn from one another and appreciate different perspectives.
- Discord Servers dedicated to cultural exchange or global topics provide real-time communication and a sense of community for people interested in learning about other cultures.

## MULTILINGUAL AND TRANSLATION FEATURES

- *Automatic Translation:* Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and LinkedIn offer automatic translation of posts, comments and messages. This feature breaks language barriers and enables users from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate and understand each other's content.
- *YouTube Subtitles:* Users can watch videos with automatic subtitles in different languages, making it easier to access content from various cultures.

# Social Media tools to promote Cultural Intelligence (2)

## HASHTAGS FOR CULTURAL MOVEMENTS AND EVENTS

- Platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok use hashtags to group content around cultural themes or movements. For example, hashtags like #Cultural-Diversity, #GlobalCitizens or #WorldCulture promote the sharing of diverse experiences and knowledge.
- Hashtags related to global events, such as #WorldMusicDay or #HeritageMonth, encourage cross-cultural sharing and discussions, helping users to learn about different cultures.

## LIVE STREAMING AND REAL-TIME INTERACTION

- Instagram Live, Facebook Live and TikTok Live allow for real-time, interactive sessions where users can host discussions or events focused on intercultural topics. These sessions can promote dialogue and encourage immediate engagement with people from different cultures.

## COLLABORATIVE CONTENT CREATION

- TikTok Duets and Instagram Reel Collaborations enable users to create joint content, often from different cultural backgrounds. These features can promote creative interactions between cultures and allow users to add their cultural context to existing videos or trends.
- YouTube Collaborations allow creators from different parts of the world to work together on projects, sharing their cultural perspectives with each other's audiences.

# Social Media tools to promote Cultural Intelligence (3)

## CULTURAL EVENTS AND VIRTUAL MEETUPS

- Facebook Events, LinkedIn Events and Eventbrite allow users to create and attend global events focused on intercultural exchange. Virtual cultural festivals, language exchange meetups and global conferences can help users to experience different cultures and promote understanding.
- Zoom Webinars integrated with social platforms can focus on intercultural topics, allowing users to engage in learning and discussions in real time.

## INTERACTIVE POLLS AND SURVEYS

- Platforms like Instagram Stories, X (formerly Twitter) Polls and LinkedIn Polls can offer interactive tools for users to engage with their audience on cultural topics, opinions and experiences. These tools can promote discussions and help to highlight cultural differences and similarities in a respectful manner.

## CULTURAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

- Social media platforms can host or encourage campaigns related to cultural awareness, such as #BlackHistoryMonth, #IndigenousPeoplesDay, or #WorldRefugeeDay. These campaigns can spread knowledge about different cultures and raise awareness about social and cultural issues, encouraging users to learn and engage.

# Social Media tools to promote Cultural Intelligence (4)

## GLOBAL DISCUSSION FORUMS



- Platforms like Reddit and Quora host global discussion forums where users can ask questions and share knowledge about different cultures, traditions and customs. These forums often promote intercultural learning and understanding through open and informative conversations.

## EDUCATIONAL CHANNELS AND PAGES

- YouTube Channels, Facebook Pages and Instagram Accounts focused on cultural education and language learning can help users to understand other cultures. Channels that promote history, cultural traditions and intercultural communication skills can provide valuable content for those looking to broaden their cultural understanding.



# Social media's impact on cultural identity and belonging

Social media has become a powerful medium for individuals and groups to maintain and voice their cultural identity, playing important roles in maintaining cultural diversity in the digital era.

Social media allows individuals and groups to maintain their cultural identity by providing an open platform for self-expression. With posts, photos, videos and other forms of content, social media users can share important aspects of their cultural identity with the world.

However, it is important to remember that social media also has negative impacts, such as the potential to fuel cultural stereotypes or conflict. These downsides can also hinder positive cultural engagement and create challenges in encouraging genuine intercultural understanding and appreciation.



# The positive impact of Social Media (1)

**Documenting cultural heritage.** Indigenous communities, ethnic groups and cultural organisations can use social media platforms to upload photos, videos and stories about their traditions, clothing, customs and significant events and rituals. Social media also allows cultural groups to share their cultural heritage with a wider audience. For example, traditional dance groups can upload their performances, while traditional music fans can share recordings and information about the music.

**Promoting and maintaining distinctive languages.** Minority language communities can use social media platforms to teach their language to younger generations, to hold online lessons or even spread literature and stories in that language. Social media also supports efforts to preserve traditions and cultural values. Communities that wish to promote certain values, such as environmental ethics, gender equality or religious tolerance, can use social media as a tool to educate and mobilise people.



# The positive impact of Social Media (2)



**Encouraging connection.** Social media presents an opportunity for individuals to connect with others who share similar interests and cultural identities, even if they are located in geographically distant locations.

**Promoting awareness.** Social media can also promote awareness about relevant cultural issues, such as environmental conservation, human rights or the preservation of endangered cultural heritage. Campaigns, petitions and discussions can take place effectively through this platform.

**Empowerment of minorities:** Social media gives a voice to marginalised or underrepresented cultural groups, offering them a platform to express their identity, advocate for their rights and raise awareness of their issues.

# The positive impact of Social Media (3)

**Global diaspora connections:** For people living away from their homeland, social media allows them to maintain connections with their culture. It bridges the gap between the diaspora and their native culture, helping them to maintain a sense of belonging.

**Breaking stereotypes:** Social media can challenge and break down cultural stereotypes by providing platforms for individuals to share their authentic experiences. These personal stories can counter the often narrow or negative portrayals of cultures in traditional media.

**Inclusion in the global conversation:** Social media lowers barriers to participation in global conversations, allowing people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, regions and cultures to contribute their perspectives. This inclusivity encourages a richer, more diverse online community.

**Cross-Cultural Exposure:** Social media introduces users to a wide range of cultures, traditions and worldviews through content like videos, posts and discussions. This exposure helps individuals become more culturally aware and encourages appreciation of global diversity.



# The negative impact of Social Media (1)

**Cultural standardisation:** Social media can contribute to the homogenisation of cultures, as global trends, particularly from dominant cultures, often overshadow local or minority traditions. This may lead to a loss of unique cultural identities as people adopt more universalised values, behaviours and lifestyles.

**Pressure to conform:** The constant exposure to popular culture, beauty standards and lifestyles on platforms like Instagram and TikTok can create pressure for individuals to conform to certain ideals. This can weaken a person's connection to their own cultural identity, especially among younger generations seeking validation online.

**Cultural Identity Crisis:** The bombardment of different cultural influences, trends and ideals can sometimes lead to confusion or internal conflict, especially for individuals who belong to multicultural backgrounds. This identity struggle may create feelings of disconnection or uncertainty about where they belong.



# The negative impact of Social Media (2)



**Spread of stereotypes:** Social media can reinforce harmful stereotypes about certain cultures or groups through memes, viral videos or biased content. These stereotypical portrayals are often oversimplified or negative, shaping perceptions in a way that diminishes authentic cultural representation.

**Cultural appropriation:** Social media platforms often showcase cultural elements (e.g., fashion, art, language) being used outside their original context, sometimes without proper understanding or respect. This appropriation can reduce the significance of these cultural elements and offend those from the cultures being borrowed from.

**Echo Chambers:** Algorithms on social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube tend to show users content that aligns with their existing beliefs, creating echo chambers. These isolated spaces can prevent cross-cultural engagement and exacerbate divisions by reinforcing cultural or ideological differences instead of encouraging dialogue.

# The negative impact of Social Media (3)

**Trolling and hate speech:** Social media can be a breeding ground for hate speech, xenophobia and racist comments, especially toward minority cultures or immigrant communities. These toxic behaviours can undermine efforts toward inclusion and create a hostile environment for marginalised groups.

**Surface-level engagement:** While social media exposes users to different cultures, it often promotes a shallow or commodified version of cultural elements, focusing on entertainment rather than deep understanding. This can result in people having a very basic or incorrect knowledge of other cultures, reducing the authenticity of cultural awareness and understanding.

**Marginalisation of certain cultures:** While some cultures thrive on social media, others may be underrepresented or excluded. This imbalance can perpetuate cultural inequalities and create a distorted understanding of global diversity, where certain cultures dominate the narrative and others are sidelined.



# STRATEGIES TO SHARE & PROMOTE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE ONLINE

Sharing and promoting cultural knowledge online is a powerful way to encourage and promote understanding, celebrate diversity and bridge cultural gaps in our increasingly globalised world.

The digital landscape provides a unique platform where individuals from different backgrounds can exchange ideas, traditions and perspectives, creating opportunities for intercultural dialogue and collaboration.

However, to ensure this process is meaningful and respectful, it requires thoughtful strategies that maintain authenticity and inclusivity. Through carefully researching and developing content, encouraging engagement and using technology platforms effectively, cultural knowledge can be shared in ways that promote learning, appreciation and global connections.



# TIPS TO PROMOTE CULTURE & DIVERSITY

If you are looking to share and promote cultural knowledge online here are some strategies you can use to spread cultural awareness and encourage intercultural understanding:

## Create relatable social media content

You can start cultural challenges on TikTok, like showcasing traditional dances, foods or languages. These fun, viral trends encourage others to join in and learn. On Instagram, you can post Reels or Stories featuring quick, interesting facts about different cultures and use polls or Q&As to get your followers involved.

## Share personal stories

Sharing your own cultural experiences or traditions makes learning about culture personal and relatable. You can start a hashtag campaign, like #MyCultureMyStory and encourage others to share their stories too, building a community around shared experiences.

## PROMOTION STRATEGIES

## Collaborate with other creators

You could team up with friends or other creators/influencers who focus on culture, diversity or education, and create content that promotes cultural awareness. Collaborating on group projects, such as digital art pieces or YouTube series that explore different cultures, is a great way to engage a wider audience.

## Create inclusive content

When you create content, think about how it can highlight cultural diversity. Share stories, traditions and experiences from different cultures. Use hashtags like #CulturalDiversity and #GlobalCommunity to reach a wider audience. Remember, your content can inspire others to learn and appreciate different cultures.

### Start a podcast

Podcasts are an awesome way to dive deep into cultural topics. You can host a podcast where you discuss your own culture, interview people from different backgrounds or explore how cultural identity impacts young people today. Highlighting youth voices can make your podcast both educational and relatable.

### Raise awareness on important cultural causes

You can use your platform to raise awareness for important cultural issues, like indigenous rights or cultural preservation. Gen-Z is known for being socially conscious, and using social media to advocate for cultural representation and inclusion can inspire your peers to get involved too.

### Promote Marginalised Voices

Social media can empower marginalised or underrepresented communities to use their voices. Share posts from underrepresented groups, support their initiatives and raise awareness about their issues. This not only shows solidarity but also helps in creating a more inclusive online environment.

### Host live sessions or virtual events

You can organise live sessions on platforms like Instagram Live or TikTok, inviting cultural experts or peers from diverse backgrounds to discuss cultural topics. Such events are interactive and give your audience a chance to ask questions and engage in real-time.

### Stand up against unethical behaviour

If you encounter unethical behaviour online, like cultural appropriation or harmful stereotypes, don't stay silent. Use your platform to call out such behaviour respectfully and constructively. Educate others on why it's problematic and advocate for respectful representation. Your voice can help to promote positive change and encourage a more inclusive and culturally sensitive online environment.

### Create eye-catching visual content

Create infographics or visual stories that explain cultural practices or histories in a fun, easy-to-understand way. You can also share photography or digital art that captures cultural moments, like traditional ceremonies or everyday life, to help your audience connect with different cultures.

### Use gamification to make learning fun

Consider promoting mobile apps and games that focus on cultural knowledge. You could also host cultural quizzes or competitions on platforms like Discord, Kahoot!, or Twitch. Turning cultural learning into a game is a fun way to get people involved and excited about learning.

# Key takeaways (1)

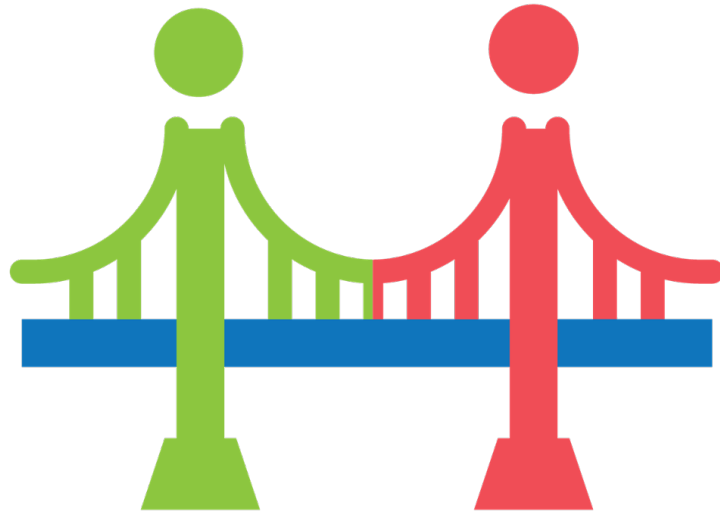
- ✓ **Dual Nature of Social Media:** Social media has the power to either promote cultural awareness and unity or create divisions, depending on how it's used. When used thoughtfully, it enables meaningful cross-cultural communication, connects diverse groups and encourages appreciation for different cultural backgrounds. However, irresponsible use, such as spreading misinformation or reinforcing harmful stereotypes, can deepen cultural divides and distort the true essence of diversity.
- ✓ **Platform-Specific Features:** Each social media platform has unique tools that can be used to enhance cultural exchange. For example, Facebook's groups and events allow people from different backgrounds to share traditions and languages, and organise cultural experiences, both online and offline. Instagram thrives on visual storytelling, where users, especially influencers, can showcase cultural practices and raise awareness through art, fashion and daily life. TikTok's viral nature, with its short-form videos, promotes creative expression, often showcasing cultural dances, music and trends, making cultural diversity accessible to a global audience.
- ✓ **Cultural Expression Online:** Social media platforms are mediums for expressing cultural values and challenging societal norms. Tools such as hashtags help to further promote and spread movements, memes convey cultural nuances often using humour and digital art shares and spreads cultural narratives. Multilingualism and code-switching create an inclusive environment where language barriers are minimised, and cultural nuances are celebrated. These platforms allow for the co-creation of cultural content by diverse groups, leading to more dynamic and inclusive cultural dialogues.

# Key takeaways (2)

- ✓ **Positive Impact on Cultural Identity:** Social media has a great potential to empower individuals and communities by offering a platform to document and share their cultural heritage. It can help to preserve languages and traditions, especially for marginalised or minority communities. Through creating global connections, social media allows for diaspora engagement, breaking stereotypes and promoting inclusion in conversations that goes across borders. It encourages individuals to engage in cross-cultural exposure, leading to greater understanding and empathy for diversity.
- ✓ **Negative Impact on Cultural Identity:** While social media offers many opportunities, it can also have negative consequences, such as the diminution of cultural uniqueness and the risk of homogenisation, where dominant cultures overshadow others. Misrepresentation or oversimplification of cultures can spread harmful stereotypes and contribute to cultural division. Additionally, some online spaces only provide a superficial understanding of cultural diversity, which can weaken authentic cultural experiences. The exclusion of underrepresented voices and the misuse of cultural symbols can further marginalise certain communities.
- ✓ **Strategies for Promoting Cultural Knowledge:** There are many ways to promote cultural intelligence online, especially using social media. To effectively promote cultural knowledge online content creators can craft relatable and engaging content that resonates with their audience. Personal stories help humanise cultural experiences and build empathy, while collaborations with other creators can broaden reach. New technologies, such as virtual reality or interactive content, offer innovative ways to share cultural narratives. Virtual cultural exchanges, live sessions and visually appealing content (such as infographics or short videos) enhance engagement and deepen cultural understanding. Using platforms to advocate for cultural representation and inclusion, especially on issues related to marginalised communities, can inspire action and promote a sense of global citizenship.

A black and white photograph of several tulip buds on stems. The buds are in various stages of opening, with some showing dark, striped patterns. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "Thank You" in a cursive font. The word "Thank" is red, and "You" is green.

*Thank You*



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**AKLUB**



**Co-funded by  
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Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them. Project Number: 2023-2-LV02-KA220-YOU-000174659