CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION VS. CULTURAL DIVERSITY: SOCIAL MEDIA'S DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT: Social media has emerged as a force influencing cultural dynamics worldwide. It shapes communication, information dissemination, and social interaction. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have transformed the way people connect, share experiences, and access information. This paper explores the dual role of social media in cultural homogenization and cultural diversity, presenting it as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, social media facilitates the rapid dissemination of global cultural trends, predominantly Western, leading to the erosion of local traditions, languages, and identities—a phenomenon known as cultural homogenization. This trend is particularly evident among African youth, who increasingly adopt global consumer behaviours, fashion and entertainment, often at the expense of their indigenous cultural practices. Conversely, social media serves as a potent tool for preserving and promoting cultural diversity, providing platforms for individuals and communities to document, share, and celebrate their unique cultural heritages. However, social media also provides a platform for marginalized voices and facilitates the spread of grassroots movements such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement. However, challenges such as cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, and the digital divide pose significant threats to the equitable representation and preservation of diverse cultures. Conclusively, navigating this double-edged sword requires conscious efforts and proactive policies that balance the benefits of global connectivity with the need to preserve and respect local cultures. Recommendations include bridging the digital divide, promoting respectful cultural exchange, and supporting the economic viability of cultural content creators.

Keywords: Cultural Homogenization, Cultural Diversity, Double-Edged Sword, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Today, social media has become an essential tool for communication, information exchange, and social involvement. These internet platforms have radically altered how we connect, share ideas, and keep informed about the world around us. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and TikTok have altered how people communicate, share experiences, and obtain information. According to Igwebuike and Chimuanya (2024) and Yékú (2022), social media has become an important platform for personal expression and public conversation. Furthermore, technology has democratised knowledge by giving marginalised voices a forum and making grassroots movements more widely diffused. Like during the Arab Spring, the #BlackLivesMatter and #EndSARS movements acquired worldwide popularity, partially due to their visibility on social media. Moreover, social media has had an amazing social, political, and economic impact worldwide, in addition to influencing individual conduct.

Furthermore, social media has transformed marketing and corporate strategies (Okonkwo & Awad, 2023; Olaniyan & Akpojivi, 2021). Companies increasingly use these channels to reach diverse audiences, interact with customers, and establish brand loyalty. Influencer marketing, a result of social media growth, has emerged as a strong instrument, with influencers impacting consumer preferences and trends. Furthermore, social media analytics provide significant knowledge on customer behaviour, allowing firms to develop more focused and successful marketing tactics. Therefore, social media has become crucial in today's corporate setting, encouraging innovation and competitiveness (Ijomah et al., 2024; Oyewobi et al., 2023). Furthermore, social media has changed the public perception of news and journalism. Traditional media channels are increasingly competing with citizen journalists who can cover events in real time. While this has boosted the accessibility and timeliness of news, it has also created problems such as false information and the creation of groups of supporters. Despite these problems, social media remains an important medium for information sharing and public involvement.

The emergence of social media has significantly altered Africa unique culture, including Nigeria. It has brought forth problems associated with cultural homogenization even as it has produced historically uncommon opportunities for cross-cultural engagement and universal connection. The continuous impact of dominant global cultures, especially Western cultures, poses a challenge to local customs, languages, and identities, eroding and outweighing them. Social media's dual effects prompt important considerations on how to strike a balance between the advantages of worldwide cultural integration and the preservation of cultural variety. Research has indicated that young Nigerians' cultural preferences and behaviours can be greatly influenced by exposure to international media, which can result in a loss of indigenous cultural traditions (Agwu et al., 2021; Ayodeji, 2021; Isokon, et al., 2022). Social media, however, also provides a strong platform for promoting and protecting Nigeria's traditions. It makes it possible to record, share, and celebrate regional customs, which helps Nigerians feel proud of their identity (Adesoji, 2023; Ahmad, et al., 2023). Finding a balance between accepting global cultural trends and maintaining local identities is the challenge. However, this study aims to explore the extent to which social media contributes to cultural homogenization and diversity in Nigeria, identifying the mechanisms through which these processes occur and proposing strategies to achieve a balance that preserves local cultural identities while embracing global influences.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the impact of social media on cultural homogenization in Nigeria
2. To investigate the role of social media in promoting cultural diversity in Nigeria
3. To examine the challenges and opportunities presented by social media for cultural preservation in Nigeria
4. To suggest recommendations for leveraging social media to enhance cultural diversity and mitigate cultural homogenization

Theoretical Review

Cultural Imperialism Theory

Cultural Imperialism Theory, developed by Herbert Schiller in 1976, posits that the media and communication systems of powerful, developed nations dominate and infiltrate the cultures of

less developed nations, leading to cultural homogenization and the erosion of local cultures (Schiller, 1976). In the aftermath of World War II, American media—particularly television, film, and advertising—started to exert a greater worldwide effect, which gave rise to Schiller's idea (Schiller, 1976). According to the theory, cultural imperialism is a type of domination that penetrates the intellectual and cultural arenas in addition to the political and economic ones. The primary means of executing this supremacy are media and communication networks, where information from strong nations—especially the United States—is disseminated globally, displacing local customs and cultures (Egere & Ushie, 2024). Consequently, indigenous cultures are marginalised and the cultural values, norms, and ideologies of the dominant nations become global standards (Schiller, 1976).

Schiller's theory explores the concept of cultural imperialism, arguing that media content is not just entertainment but also a medium for cultural values and ideologies. Cultures can become dependent on one another and copy dominant media styles as a result of the dissemination of media material from dominating nations, which can also change societal structures and value systems (Jacobs, 2014). Language dominance, in which English predominates over regional tongues, and the dissemination of consumer culture and capitalist ideals through advertising are only two examples of how this might appear (Abdullahi, 2024; Egere & Ushie, 2024). The theory also emphasises the nature of international media flows, which see little to no reverse flow and a penetration of markets and cultures by material from dominating nations into less developed ones. The disparity marginalises alternative narratives and local concerns while limiting the range of viewpoints in the global media environment and reinforcing cultural hegemony.

Cultural Imperialism Theory remains highly relevant to cultural homogenization and diversity in the age of globalization, particularly through social media. The theory holds that Western cultural products, which are distributed through global media networks, dominate and eventually erode local cultures, generating a homogenised global culture. The pattern is frequently seen in Nigeria, where Western media's ubiquitous impact via social media platforms has serious consequences for traditional practices and identities. Western culture has had an impact on many facets of African society, including fashion, music, language, and social standards. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are filled with Western material, which Nigerian youths adore. Adoption of Western ideals and lifestyles may result from this exposure, occasionally at the detriment of native Nigerian traditions (Agwu et al., 2021; Adesoji, 2023). This supports Schiller's claim that cultural dominance is channelled through the media, resulting in cultural uniformity.

Furthermore, Western cultural hegemony is strengthened by the English language's predominance on these platforms. In a digital environment where English-language material predominates, indigenous languages and cultural expressions find it difficult to become visible and prominent. As a part of cultural imperialism, this linguistic imperialism marginalises regional languages and the cultural identities associated with them (Rapanyane, 2021). This situation is especially worrisome in Nigeria, a bilingual nation where language plays a vital role in maintaining cultural variety. Nigerian cultural imperialism is a result of the technological and economic might of Western nations. The majority of Western businesses own and run the major social media platforms. These corporations also control the algorithms and policies that decide what information is promoted or banned (Jacobs, 2014). Since local content makers must navigate these Western-centric channels to acquire attention, corporate control perpetuates the cultural domination of the West (Moyo, 2024). As a result, Nigerian

culture is frequently portrayed on social media via a Western perspective, which weakens its authenticity and diversity.

Overview of Globalization and Its Cultural Impact

Globalisation is the process of greater mutual dependence and connection among countries, fuelled by developments in technology, trade, and communication. This occurrence has had a profound influence on societies worldwide, with both positive and harmful implications. On the one hand, globalisation has allowed the interchange of ideas, customs, and cultural practices, resulting in increased understanding and collaboration between cultures. For example, the global appeal of sushi, yoga, and hip-hop music demonstrates how cultural aspects may cross boundaries and improve civilizations throughout the world. As a result, globalisation may be viewed as a driver of cultural value and diversity (Imane & Barbosa, 2022). However, globalisation has raised concerns about cultural homogeneity, in which dominant cultures overtake and erode indigenous customs and identities. The pervasive impact of Western culture, notably through media and entertainment, has resulted in the global adoption of Western lifestyles, beliefs, and purchasing habits. This can lead to the extinction of indigenous cultures and languages when local conventions are superseded by global standards.

The dominance of English as a worldwide lingua franca, as well as the growth of Hollywood films, demonstrate how globalisation may lead to cultural homogeneity. The cultural influence of globalisation is complicated, requiring a careful balance of cultural exchange and preservation (Lamidi, 2020). Furthermore, globalisation has economic and social implications that affect cultural dynamics. Global market integration has contributed to economic growth and development in many countries, but it has also worsened inequities and disturbed traditional lifestyles (Obomeghie & Ugbomhe, 2021; Osinubi & Olomola, 2021). Migrant labour, for instance, has a wide range of cultural impacts on host nations while simultaneously challenging societal cohesiveness and identity. Similarly, global tourism encourages cultural exchange while simultaneously increasing the monetization of culture and environmental damage. Thus, the cultural impact of globalisation is closely dependent on wider economic and social dynamics, emphasising the importance of complex and context-specific ways to mitigate its impacts (Sorensen, 2023).

Brief Introduction to Africa's Diverse Cultural Landscape

Africa is famous for its extensive and varied cultural history. With nearly 1.3 billion people living there, it is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, dialects, and cultures. Each African country has its own culture, moulded by history, geography, and social dynamics. Africa's cultural richness, from ancient civilizations such as Egypt and Ethiopia to lively modern cultures such as Nigeria and South Africa, reflects the continent's vast and complicated past. Music, dance, visual arts, and literature are among the continent's cultural manifestations, each expressing its people's unique identity and legacy. However, Africa's cultural environment is unique and dynamic, constantly evolving and nonetheless protecting its treasured traditions. Furthermore, Africa's cultural variety is strongly rooted in its language diversity. The continent is home to approximately 2,000 to 2,400 languages, including significant language families such as Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan, Niger-Congo, and Khoisan (Segerer & Vanhove, 2022). This language diversity reflects the socioeconomic and cultural history of African groups.

Swahili, a Bantu language with Arabic overtones, is used as a lingua franca throughout East Africa, allowing trade and interaction among different ethnic groups.

Similarly, the common usage of languages such as Hausa, Yoruba, and Amharic demonstrate their cultural and historical relevance in their particular areas. Consequently, Africa's linguistic variety is an important part of its cultural identity, emphasising the role of language in cultural preservation and expression. Additionally, Africa's cultural context is distinguished by acute traditions and social behaviours. Traditional festivals, rituals, and ceremonies are important parts of communal life because they celebrate significant events and strengthen social connections. In this regard, the Durbar celebration in Nigeria and Ghana commemorates chieftaincy and military heritage via extravagant parades and equestrian displays. Similarly, the Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania are recognised for their distinct attire, dancing, and rituals that promote communal solidarity and respect for the environment. These cultural traditions help to transmit values and knowledge between generations in addition to expressing one's identity. Africa's cultural richness is mirrored in the many ways in which its people celebrate, express, and preserve their heritage.

Nigeria, Africa's most populated country, has a unique cultural variety. Nigeria is home to approximately 250 distinct ethnic groups, each with its customs, dialects, and ways of life. These include the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Igbo in the southeast, the Urhobos and Ijaws in the south–south, and the Yoruba in the southwest. This tradition has long served as a source of pride and identity for Nigerians. However, as the globe becomes increasingly globalised, there are growing concerns about the possible homogeneity of Nigeria's cultural environment. The rapid development of Western media, the dominance of the English language, and the impact of consumerism have all contributed to the destruction of local customs, dialects, and creative manifestations. There are concerns that the continuing advance of globalisation may endanger the variety that has distinguished the Nigerian experience, as traditional ways of living collide with dominating foreign cultural influences.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION IN AFRICA

Cultural Homogenization

Cultural homogenization is the process by which local cultures become more similar to one another because of the impact of dominating global civilizations. This phenomenon is mostly caused by globalisation and the reach of mainstream media, particularly social media. As people throughout the world gain access to the same information, entertainment, and commercial goods, unique cultural identities may begin to blend (Abdullahi, 2024). One notable example of cultural homogeneity is the global expansion of Western, primarily American, culture. Hollywood films, fast food chains such as McDonald's, and multinational brands such as Apple and Nike dominate cultural landscapes throughout the world, inspiring people to embrace Western lifestyles, beliefs, and consumption patterns. Consequently, local traditions, dialects, and behaviours may be eclipsed, resulting in a loss of cultural diversity (Mohamoud, 2022).

Furthermore, the growth of digital technology and social media has accelerated cultural uniformity. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter create a worldwide platform for trends and ideas to propagate quickly and broadly. Western influencers and celebrities frequently set worldwide trends in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. For example, American music

and design styles have influenced youth culture in several ways, ranging from Asian metropolitan centres to African rural areas. The similarity of cultural manifestations lowers the visibility and importance of local cultures (Olajide & Ejere, 2022). Furthermore, social media algorithms frequently prioritise information that is consistent with popular worldwide trends, strengthening the dominance of particular cultural narratives while limiting the representation of local cultures (Colombo, et al., 2023). Therefore, cultural homogenization can lead to a more standardized global culture, with less room for unique and diverse cultural expressions.

Furthermore, economic globalisation greatly leads to uniformity in culture (Abdullahi, 2024). Multinational firms use global supply chains and marketing methods to promote a standardised set of products and services across several markets. This affects not only consumer behaviour but also societal norms and values. Meanwhile, the global influence of companies such as Coca-Cola and Starbucks encourages a culture of convenience and quick consumption, which can damage traditional culinary habits and social relationships centred on local cuisine (Ajala, 2021). Furthermore, the introduction of shopping malls and foreign retail chains in emerging nations frequently replaces local enterprises and traditional marketplaces. Economic globalisation promotes a consumer culture that values efficiency and uniformity above local distinctiveness and tradition. Thus, cultural homogenization is complex because media art and economics work together to erode unique cultural identities.

Social Media as a Tool for Cultural Homogenization

The popularisation of Western culture via social media platforms has resulted in substantial cultural transformations among African users. Social media, with its immense reach and accessibility, acts as a conduit for the spread of Western ideals, lifestyles, and shopping behaviour. Western material dominates platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, ranging from Hollywood films and music videos to fashion trends and lifestyle blogs. Nigerian users, particularly younger generations, are extremely engaged with this content, frequently mimicking Western behaviours and tastes (Obiero et al., 2023). However, regular exposure to Western content on social media reflects a trend of cultural homogeneity in which local traditions and identities are progressively eclipsed by global, primarily Western, values. According to Gathara (2022), social media significantly influences young Africans' consumption patterns and lifestyle choices, which are often modelled after Western standards.

Furthermore, the global music industry, dominated by Western genres such as hip-hop, pop, and electronic dance music (EDM), has had a considerable impact on African youth's musical choices. Many African musicians adopt parts of Western genres into their music, combining them with native sounds to produce hybrid styles that appeal to both local and international audiences. While this combination can result in new musical manifestations, it also raises concerns about the loss of real African musical heritage (Bhanye et al., 2023). In addition to fashion and music, worldwide culture, notably films and television series, has a large influence on African youth. Hollywood films and popular TV programmes from platforms such as Netflix dominate the entertainment scene, providing Western storylines and cultural representations that influence young Africans' worldviews and ambitions. Shows such as "Stranger Things," "Game of Thrones," and "The Witcher" are extremely popular and frequently outperform local efforts. These shows' portrayals of lifestyles, relationships, and societal concerns affect African youth views and behaviours, leading to the adoption of Western standards and ideals. This trend is visible in the shifting dynamics of family and societal responsibilities among young people, as emphasised by Camara (2023).

Additionally, African cultures are more Westernized because international popular content is prioritised by social media algorithms. This is because such algorithms are created to keep users engaged, hence pushing for global trends or Western-oriented information. This implies that most times Africans will find themselves confronted by things from the West, while their own may not receive as much attention or view. This generates a feedback cycle in which Western culture becomes increasingly entrenched in the digital realm, marginalising local cultural manifestations (Graham & Dutton, 2019).

Adoption of Global Consumer Behaviour and Lifestyle Trends

Another important part of social media-driven cultural homogeneity is African youth's embrace of global shopping behaviour and lifestyle trends. The presence of global businesses and effective marketing efforts on social media platforms have significant impacts on customer preferences and behaviours (Arogundade, 2017; Macheka et al., 2024). The extensive use of smartphones and gadgets by African youth demonstrates the appeal of global tech firms such as Apple and Samsung. The urge to buy the most recent iPhone or Samsung Galaxy model is not only practical but also a status symbol, reflecting a worldwide consumer culture that prizes brand prestige and technological sophistication. That said, a desire for global brands has the potential to devalue local enterprises and traditional crafts, resulting in a homogenised consumer landscape.

Furthermore, social media platforms enable an expansion of lifestyle patterns that prioritise ease, luxury, and modernism. Influencers and celebrities frequently flaunt their lives, which includes eating at high-end restaurants, working out, and travelling to exotic destinations (Adesoji, 2023). Similar depictions serve as aspirational standards for African youths who want to mimic similar lifestyles. The fitness and wellness movement, popularised by global celebrities, has resulted in a surge in gym memberships, fitness app usage, and health supplement consumption among African youth. This move towards a more globalised way of living is a reflection of the greater tendency of cultural homogenization, in which regional customs and more basic lifestyles are gradually being supplanted by practices of global consumerism (Adewusi, 2021). Therefore, African youth's acceptance of global lifestyle trends represents a profound cultural change.

The food and beverage sector, in particular, has an enormous impact on the eating patterns of African adolescents due to its global reach. Fast food restaurants such as KFC, Domino's Pizza, and McDonald's have become more well-known because of their connections to convenience, modernity, and a worldwide way of life. These companies are promoted through social media marketing and influencer endorsements, which help explain changes in eating habits and nutritional preferences. These international fast-food restaurants compete with diverse and culturally significant traditional African cuisines. Concern over the growth of obesity and associated health issues is increasing. For example, the number of overweight children in Africa doubled from 5.4 million to 10.3 million between 1991 and 2016, reflecting a broader trend of increasing obesity rates across the continent (Think Global Health, 2022).

Furthermore, the process of cultural homogenization involves more significant lifestyle shifts than just dietary choices. This dynamic is greatly influenced by the idea of "glocalization," in which multinational companies adjust to local preferences while retaining their essential character. Local flavours are included in the menus of fast-food franchises such as McDonald's and KFC, which occasionally results in creative culinary fusions. However, this also makes

people worry that real cultural identities and customs are being lost (The Yale Globalist, 2023). This diet change has important health ramifications. Diets heavy in salt and saturated fat, which are found in fast food, increase the risk of diabetes and heart disease by causing weight gain and hypertension (Nutri Explore Globe, 2023; Uthman-Akinhanmi et al., 2022; Mohajeri, 2021).

Erosion of Indigenous Languages and Traditions

The emergence of social media has had a substantial impact on the decline of native languages and customs around the world, particularly in Africa. Local languages are frequently marginalised on social media platforms since they are dominated by global languages such as English, French, and Spanish. African youth are increasingly using these main languages online to engage in global trends and discourses. The way material is produced and used on social media is changing. To reach a larger audience, however, many African influencers and content creators publish their blogs, films, and articles in English or French (Egbokhare, 2021). Indigenous languages are used less frequently because people believe that they are less important in the digital era. This trend not only diminishes the everyday usage of local languages but also undermines their status and prestige among younger generations (Egbokhare, 2021).

Moreover, cultural expressions and traditional knowledge are disappearing together with the decrease in local languages on social media (Aboh, 2022; Onyenankeya, 2022). Indigenous languages frequently contain distinctive cultural idioms, metaphors, and notions that are essential to a community's cultural identity and legacy. The rich oral traditions, folklore, and wisdom of these languages are in danger of disappearing as they become less widely spoken and appreciated (Onyenankeya, 2022). Oral storytelling traditions are common in many African communities and are used to transmit moral teachings, historical narratives, and communal values. Due to young generations' preference for digital information in widely spoken global languages, these stories—which are frequently passed down through generations in indigenous languages—face extinction (Onyenankeya, 2022). Therefore, the loss of traditional knowledge systems and cultural assets resulting from the deterioration of indigenous languages weakens the cultural fabric of these communities (Bihari, 2023).

Furthermore, social media has had an impact on the decline of customs and traditions. Local cultural practices are frequently overshadowed by global material, which makes them seem obsolete or out of date (Amalu et al., 2021). Younger people pay less attention to and participate in traditional African festivals, dances, and rituals, which are essential for maintaining cultural continuity and fostering community ties. Rather, international cultural celebrations and fads such as Halloween, Valentine's Day, and Western-style parties have gained prominence. This change has an impact on how cultural practices and beliefs are passed down to the next generations as well as changing the cultural landscape. Additionally, if contemporary, Westernised festivals become more popular, the celebration of traditional rites of passage— which, in many African societies, signal key life stages—may decrease. Therefore, the erosion of traditional practices due to social media contributes to the homogenization of cultural expressions and the weakening of cultural continuity (Akingbe, et al., 2020).

Changes in Social Values and Norms

Societal media has a significant influence on societal norms and values since it frequently propagates beliefs and lifestyles worldwide, especially in the West. African young adults who are constantly exposed to information from across the world have started to embrace new social norms and values that could be very different from those they were brought up with. However, individuality, self-expression, and materialism are often encouraged on social media platforms, which runs counter to the community values, humility, and thrift that are customarily maintained in many African societies. African youth may have different objectives and aspirations as a result of an emphasis on the monetary success, self-promotion, and personal accomplishment that they observe on social media (Hargroves, 2020). This change is reflected in the growing emphasis on social media postings and profiles that show personal branding, the quest for celebrities, and the acquisition of material prosperity.

Social media also affects people's perceptions of social issues, including relationships, gender roles, and family structures (Bloemen & De Coninck, 2020). Western representations of liberal sexual views, LGBTQ+ rights, and gender equality frequently influence African youth discourse and perspectives. On the other hand, social media campaigns supporting same-sex couples, women's rights, and other progressive issues are quite popular and have a large impact on public opinion. Tensions with long-standing cultural norms and practices may arise from these changes, even if they may also encourage constructive social reforms and more inclusion. Meanwhile, as stated by Dreier et al., (2020) the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights may clash with conservative cultural and religious beliefs in many African societies, leading to social conflicts and loss of identity.

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN NIGERIA

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity encompasses differences in language, religion, art, traditions, and lifestyles, contributing to the uniqueness and complexity of human experience. It is the way cultural expressions, practices, and identities exist within a society or the world at large. Often referred to as a valuable asset, cultural diversity is seen as a way to foster creativity, innovation, and social cohesion. (Omotosho et al., 2020; Oruebo & David-Alonge, 2024). However, multicultural communities benefit from a diverse set of ideas and talents, which improve problem solving and flexibility. Furthermore, cultural variety fosters mutual understanding and respect between diverse communities, eliminating prejudice and promoting peaceful cohabitation. Furthermore, cultural diversity is essential for the preservation of human legacy. Each culture possesses distinct knowledge, customs, and practices that have been established for centuries. This cultural history not only provides communities with a sense of identity and pride but also provides significant insights and answers to current difficulties. Therefore, to preserve and restore cultural diversity, it is important to protect and revitalize the indigenous knowledge systems responsible for preserving environmentally friendly agricultural methods, healing practices, and environmental conservation (Obiero et al., 2023).

Cultural diversity contributes to social and economic life by encouraging creativity, innovation, and economic prosperity. This diversity of opinion provides a competitive edge in a globalised economy where innovation and adaptation are critical to success. However, cultural diversity has the potential to boost economic growth. According to Jejeniwa et al. (2024), societal

tolerance of cultural diversity and skill in widely spoken languages has a favourable influence on economic performance but in complex ways that are dependent on the availability of supporting institutions and policies. Furthermore, cultural heterogeneity attracts tourists, investors and highly skilled professionals, all of whom are crucial for economic development (Adedoyin, et al., 2022). In the same vein, the various cultural festivals organized throughout the world through museums or heritage sites have made positive contributions to both increasing tourism and enabling cross-cultural exchanges (Ohenhen et al., 2024).

Social Media as a Promoter of Cultural Diversity: Preservation and Promotion of Local Cultures

In terms of saving and showing native cultures, social media has evolved as a powerful tool providing an avenue for developing and sharing those that belong to that culture. It is through social media that traditional customs remain relevant because individuals can post their cultural practices online, hence passing them over to their children. This approach is particularly applicable to platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter (X), and Facebook, which allow people to make and share photos and videos that perfectly convey the spirit of their cultural heritage. However, many indigenous groups now utilize these platforms for film customs, dances, and ceremonies, giving rise to an internationally accessible visual and audio record. In addition to preserving these customs for future generations, digital archiving fosters respect for and understanding of a variety of cultural traditions (Balogun & Kalusopa, 2022). Therefore, by preserving a live archive of cultural practices, social media helps to protect indigenous cultures.

Case Studies of Nigerian Festivals Promoted on Social Media

Ojude Oba Festival

One of the best examples of how social media helps to conserve and promote local traditions is the Ojude Oba Festival, which is observed by the Ijebu people of Ogun State. This yearly celebration, which takes place on the third day following the Islamic holiday of Eid-el-Kabir, commemorates the unique cultural legacy of the Ijebu people, which includes vibrant parades, traditional dances, music, and extravagant costumes. A worldwide audience is reached by the widespread use of social media channels to disseminate real-time information, images, and videos from the event. Using hashtags such as #OjudeOba, influencers and attendees share their impressions and build a digital record of the occasion. In addition to keeping the festival's traditions alive, this website draws tourists and culture vultures, boosting the local economy. This indicates that social media is crucial for preserving and publicising the Ojude Oba Festival and guaranteeing its future significance and respect.

Calabar Carnival

The Calabar Carnival, which is held in the Cross River State and is often referred to as "Africa's Biggest Street Party," is another illustration of how social media encourages cultural variety. Held in December each year, this month-long celebration showcases vibrant parades, musical acts, dancers, and theatrical productions that honour Nigeria's unique cultural variety. Social media channels are utilised to share highlights, stream live events, and interact with a worldwide audience. By allowing attendees and spectators to share their experiences, hashtags such as #CalabarCarnival help foster a lively online community around the event. Celebrities

and influencers frequently attend the event and spread the word about it, increasing its popularity and visibility. The cultural importance and enthusiasm of the Calabar Carnival are preserved by the organizers through social media documentation and sharing.

Argungu Fishing Festival

The Argungu Fishing Festival in Kebbi State, northern Nigeria, is an important cultural festival that highlights traditional fishing skills and cultural customs. This yearly celebration, held along the banks of the Sokoto River, includes fishing competitions, traditional music, dance, and other cultural activities. Social media channels are utilized to provide live news, images, and videos from festivals, reaching viewers well beyond the local community. Hashtags such as #ArgunguFestival assist in collecting material and engaging viewers, resulting in a digital narrative of the event. The Argungu Fishing Festival receives international notoriety via social media, drawing tourists and encouraging regional cultural tourism. As a result, social media plays an important role in maintaining and promoting the cultural legacy of northern Nigeria.

New Yam Festival

The New Yam Festival, observed by numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria, commemorates the conclusion of the agricultural season and the start of the harvest. This celebration, which varies in time but is often held in August, features traditional dances, music, eating, and gratitude rituals. Live updates, images, and videos from the festival are shared on social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, reaching a large audience. Hashtags such as #NewYamFestival assist in collecting material and engaging viewers, resulting in a digital narrative of the event. Social media has been crucial in capturing the New Yam Festival, which is celebrated by the Igbo people to signal the start of the yam harvest season. Videos and images from the celebration, which feature colourful apparel, traditional dances, and community feasts, are widely shared, allowing both local and worldwide audiences to see and appreciate the diversity of Igbo culture. Therefore, social media helps to conserve these cultural traditions by generating digital archives that future generations may access and learn from.

Furthermore, social media facilitates instantaneous sharing and interaction with cultural events, promoting a feeling of community and involvement (Bhanye, et al., 2023). Social media also provides people and communities with a forum to express their cultural narratives and challenge prevailing global narratives that might eclipse regional customs. In Nigeria, people are encouraged to post about their cultural history, traditional clothing, and regional customs through campaigns such as #OurCultureOurPride on Instagram and Twitter. This grassroots movement adds to the global cultural mosaic by preserving a variety of cultural manifestations and encouraging pride in cultural identity (Ohenhen, et al., 2024). These efforts ensure that cultural traditions are not only recorded but also appreciated and perpetuated in the digital age by utilising hashtags and interacting with a larger audience. Through these initiatives, social media serves as a bridge across cultural divides, fostering tolerance and understanding among people.

Social media also gives people and groups the ability to take charge of their cultural narratives and ensure that they are genuinely and honestly presented (Ohenhen, et al., 2024). In the past, outside parties were frequently involved in the portrayal of indigenous cultures, which resulted in cultural appropriation and misrepresentations. However, social media gives indigenous people the opportunity to be the main cultural heritage storytellers. The increasing number of

native influencers and content producers using social media to communicate their viewpoints and experiences is indicative of this change. Meanwhile, native influencers on social media sites such as TikTok produce material that showcases their traditional attire, dialects, and day-to-day activities, providing a genuine window into their way of life. This honest portrayal contributes to dispelling myths and offers more complex knowledge of indigenous cultures (Onyenankeya, 2022). This serves as a powerful tool for indigenous people to reclaim and promote their cultural identities.

Platforms Dedicated to African Arts, Music, and Literature

Apart from personal endeavours, social media platforms have surfaced to honour and advance African arts, music, and literature, greatly contributing to the preservation and advancement of cultural diversity (Camara, 2020). Afropunk, African Digital Art, NairaLand, and other websites and social media pages provide African authors, singers, and artists with a platform for sharing their work and reaching a global audience. These forums demonstrate the value of ancient and indigenous art forms while also showcasing current African ingenuity. African Digital Art is a collection of pieces that combines contemporary digital technology with traditional African aesthetics to foster conversation between the past and present (Onebunne, 2023). Thus, these venues contribute to the preservation and advancement of African cultural expressions, guaranteeing their continued vibrancy and relevance in a continually changing manner (Agawu, 2023).

Furthermore, social media has made it easier for African music to be heard around the world. Websites such as YouTube, Spotify, and Audiomack have been crucial in promoting Nigerian musicians and musical genres. Afrobeats, which were popularized worldwide by Nigerian musicians such as Davido, Wizkid, and Olamide, may be partially credited to their astute use of social media to connect with a global fan base. These musicians promote Nigerian music and culture internationally by using social media to convey parts of their cultural heritage, interact with followers, and produce new songs (Agawu, 2023; Nwagwu & Akintoye, 2023). Furthermore, social media platforms are now essential for advancing African literature, as they give writers new ways to connect with readers and tell their tales. While platforms such as Okadabooks in Nigeria provide digital publishing and distribution options for African authors, campaigns such as #ReadAfrican on Twitter and Instagram encourage users to read and discuss African literature. Nigerian authors who investigate modern African realities and add to the canon of literature worldwide, such as Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Teju Cole, have benefited from these efforts by having their profiles increased. Social media is essential for maintaining and advancing cultural diversity in the literature because it gives African voices and histories a forum (Ligidima & Makananise, 2020).

Social Media as a Space for Cultural Pride and Resistance

Social media now serves as an important platform for marginalizing individuals' cultural pride and resistance, giving them a voice in challenging prevailing narratives and claiming their identities. (Yékú, 2022; Olaniyan & Akpojivi, 2021). For example, the #ReclaimingOurTime Twitter campaign has played a significant role in drawing attention to the accomplishments and tenacity of African and women of African descent in a variety of disciplines. This movement opposes systematic racism and sexism in addition to celebrating cultural pride. Furthermore, indigenous groups utilize social media to promote the preservation of their languages and customs, which are frequently in danger due to globalisation (Madima &

Makananise, 2024). The significance of preserving linguistic variety and cultural knowledge ingrained in indigenous languages is underscored by campaigns such as Twitter's #MotherLanguageDay. As a result, social media offers a strong forum for identity assertion and cultural criticism.

Social media platforms offer a forum for generational communication and the dissemination of cultural knowledge. A cultural legacy may be handed down and conserved when elderly members of the community impart knowledge, customs, and tales to younger people. For younger audiences who might not have direct access to African folklore, traditional medicine, or cooking practices in their everyday life, platforms such as YouTube channels are a great resource. Social media therefore serve as an essential medium for cultural heritage transmission and preservation in addition to encouraging cultural pride and resistance (Ugwu, 2024; Yékú, 2022).

Movements and Campaigns Promoting African Heritage and History

Social media has played a significant role in promoting African history and tradition through several movements and initiatives that seek to inspire, inform, and bring people together. These digital ads frequently concentrate on showcasing Africa's cultural history, honouring its accomplishments, and eradicating historical errors and omissions. The #AfricanHistoryMonth movement on Twitter and Instagram is one remarkable instance. Its goal is to establish an annual date for honouring African history, equivalent to Black History Month in the United States. The goal of this campaign is to increase awareness of Africa's cultural legacy by encouraging people to contribute historical data, statistics, and events that demonstrate the continent's contributions to global history. Furthermore, social media movements frequently spotlight certain historical events and cultural practices, bringing them to the attention of the general public (Akpan & Targema, 2022). However, the #BringBackOurGirls movement, which began on Twitter, attracted public attention to Boko Haram's kidnapping of schoolgirls in Borno State, Nigeria. This movement focused not only on the current crisis but also on the region's cultural and social dynamics as a whole. Similarly, the #EndSARS movement, which began on social media, brought awareness to police brutality in Nigeria, linking past patterns of oppression to present fights for justice. These movements utilise social media to rally support, disseminate information, and advocate for change, proving the platform's ability to increase cultural knowledge and historical understanding (Akpan & Targema, 2022).

In addition, social media campaigns frequently work with celebrities, artists, and cultural organisations to allow their messaging and reach a larger audience. For instance, the #MuseumWeek campaign celebrates cultural heritage on social media for a week, bringing together museums and other cultural institutions from all over the world—many of which are located in Africa. To meaningfully engage viewers, this event invites institutions to provide behind-the-scenes information, historical artefacts, and instructional resources. In a similar vein, partnerships with well-known artists and influencers may aid in raising awareness of cultural movements and initiatives. Through artistic representations, the #Olokun hashtag on Instagram depicts traditional gods and culture. Social media, thus, acts as a bridge between generations, allowing cultural traditions to be preserved (Gonzalez & Deng, 2023). African musicians frequently utilise their platforms to spread historical consciousness and cultural pride. One example of this is when they create music with traditional themes and sounds and then post it on social media, such as #Parableofthetalent, where regional artists are presenting

their works. Through these partnerships, cultural movements are made more visible and influential, thus advancing African history and legacy.

Strengthening Community Bonds

Social media has profoundly impacted the way African diaspora communities connect and engage with each other, fostering a sense of unity and cultural continuity despite geographical distances. By providing a platform for real-time communication and interaction, social media enables members of the diaspora to maintain strong ties with their heritage and each other. This digital connectivity plays a crucial role in preserving cultural practices, traditions, and languages that might otherwise be diluted or lost in the diaspora. First, social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram serve as virtual gathering spaces where diaspora communities can share news, cultural events, and personal milestones. These platforms allow individuals to participate in discussions, share memories, and celebrate cultural festivals together, even when they are thousands of miles apart. For example, a Nigerian family in the United States can participate in a live-streamed New Yam Festival celebration hosted by their relatives in Nigeria, which is part of the festivities despite the distance. This ability to share and celebrate cultural events strengthens community bonds and ensures that cultural traditions are passed through generations.

Furthermore, social media supports the creation of online groups and communities dedicated to specific cultural interests and identities. These groups often serve as support networks where members can seek advice, share experiences, and offer assistance to one another (Akanle & Ola-Lawson, 2022). For instance, Facebook groups such as "African Diaspora Connect" and "Igbo Cultural Heritage" provide spaces where members can discuss issues relevant to their communities, share cultural knowledge, and organize events. Such groups are invaluable for newcomers adjusting to life in a new country, providing them with a sense of belonging and a support system rooted in shared cultural identity. Additionally, social media platforms facilitate cultural exchange and learning within the African diaspora and beyond. By sharing content related to their cultural heritage, diaspora communities can educate others about their traditions, values, and history (Akanle, et al., 2021). This exchange promotes cross-cultural understanding, helping to bridge cultural gaps and reduce stereotypes. For example, YouTube channels featuring traditional African cooking, storytelling, and music allow viewers from different backgrounds to learn about and appreciate African culture.

Moreover, social media plays a critical role in mobilizing diaspora communities for social, political, and economic reasons. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are often used to raise awareness about issues affecting communities back home and to organize collective actions. For instance, during the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria, diaspora communities used social media to spread information, organize protests, and raise funds in support of the cause. This digital activism not only strengthens community bonds but also amplifies the voices of those within the diaspora, enabling them to effect change both locally and globally. In addition, social media allows for the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages, which are crucial components of cultural identity. Diaspora communities use platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube to conduct language classes, share educational resources, and encourage the use of native languages in daily communication. This effort helps to ensure that younger generations remain connected to their linguistic heritage, even if they are growing up in a different cultural environment.

Successful Digital Initiatives Preserving Local Languages and Traditions

A prominent digital initiative that strives to maintain regional languages and customs is the "Speak Yoruba Fluently" YouTube channel. To promote the Yoruba language and culture, this channel provides a range of instructional content, including language courses, traditional storytelling, and cultural insights. The channel has a sizable fan base and is an invaluable resource for Yoruba speakers and learners throughout the globe. This initiative contributed to the preservation and promotion of the Yoruba language and cultural legacy by utilizing social media to make language instruction approachable and interesting. In the same vein, the "Igbo Language Preservation" effort on Facebook aims to preserve and advance the Igbo language. The goal of this initiative is to preserve the Igbo language among the next generation by providing online classes, interactive language learning materials, and cultural conversations. To build a lively community centred around Igbo culture, the group also invited members to share their experiences, stories, and customs. These kinds of programmes are essential for preserving linguistic variety and guaranteeing that cultural customs are transmitted between generations.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD: BALANCING ACT

The relationship between social media and cultural identity is indeed a double-edged sword, offering both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, social media platforms have democratized the dissemination of cultural content, providing space for underrepresented cultures to be showcased and celebrated. On the other hand, the pervasive influence of global media can sometimes overshadow local traditions and identities, creating a complex balancing act for individuals and communities.

Opportunities and Benefits

Cultural expression and exchange are greatly facilitated by social media platforms. These platforms allow individuals and communities to participate in the expression of their cultural practices, traditions and narratives on an international scale. However, this has been thought to enhance cultural awareness and comprehension among diverse populations, thereby promoting more inclusiveness and diversity across nations. In addition, the wide popularity of African music styles such as Afrobeats on websites such as YouTube and TikTok has made the musical heritage of Africa known to listeners throughout the world. In addition to promoting African culture, this provides artists and other creative financial opportunities. Social media also provides marginalized people with a voice and a platform to defend their rights and cultural heritage, which empowers them. Social media has been used by movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #IndigenousPeoplesDay to highlight cultural identities and bring attention to social justice problems. These movements show how social media can be an instrument for social change, encouraging unity and cultural pride across many populations.

Challenges in Balancing Global Influences with Local Identity

Balancing global influences with local identity is yet another challenge for African groups on social media. Although there are many advantages to global connectedness, local cultures and identities may be lost. The prevalence of Western media and cultural information on social media, for instance, has the potential to overpower local traditions and customs. It is possible that pressure to conform to global trends may cause young people in particular to lose interest

in their cultural heritage. A prime instance of this is how international fashion trends have affected traditional African attire. On social media, there is a growing interest in African fashion; however, local fashion choices are influenced by Western design trends, which obscure traditional attire. This effect is seen in the growing trend of Western-style clothes among young Africans, which occasionally results in a decrease in the use of traditional attire. Furthermore, the music business faces the problem of striking a balance between local and global influences. Afrobeats and other African music styles are becoming more well known worldwide, but there is a chance that the financial demands of the global music business could weaken the authenticity of these genres. To reach a wider audience, artists could feel pressured to incorporate Western musical themes slang and techniques, which could jeopardize the ethnic authenticity of what they produce.

Finding the Balance and Recommendations

Balancing between cultural homogenization and cultural diversity on social media requires a delicate stand where the advantages of global interconnection are in equilibrium with the necessity of maintaining and honouring local cultures. First and foremost, individuals and communities actively promote their cultural heritage on social media, ensuring that their stories are presented authentically and respectfully. This attempt may be greatly enhanced by educational campaigns and initiatives that emphasize the value of cultural preservation and the dangers of cultural appropriation. Second, social media platforms themselves may be extremely important because they can establish rules and regulations that support cultural diversity and guard against appropriation. These platforms can establish clear standards for the polite exchange of cultural content and offer transparent procedures for handling cases of cultural misrepresentation. Social media platforms can guarantee that content producers profit financially by providing them with the tools and resources necessary to monetize their cultural contributions. This will encourage the promotion of varied cultures.

Recommendations

- The government and corporate sector should invest in expanding internet connectivity, especially in rural and underserved areas. This will bridge the digital gap and guarantee that everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in the digital cultural scene.
- Social media companies may work with indigenous cultural organisations to generate and promote content celebrating our different cultures. This involves collaborating with local artists, singers, and filmmakers to create high-quality cultural material.
- Government and nongovernmental organizations could finance digital campaigns that promote festivals such as Igede Agba Yam and Ojude Oba, which will increase their awareness and maintain their relevance for future generations.
- Social media platforms should establish policies to combat cultural appropriation and guarantee that cultural information is disseminated appropriately and respectfully.
- Content producers who prioritize cultural promotion and preservation should receive financial rewards and assistance. Cultural hubs and incubators are created as places for creators to meet, exchange ideas, and work together to develop material that celebrates culture.
- Instructional materials and digital archives that capture and maintain cultural customs, languages, and practices are provided. Online platforms should be used to make these resources available to a large audience.

Conclusion

Social media is a major factor that defines cultural identity and presents several benefits as well as difficulties. Social media is an instrument for cultural homogeneity because it makes it easier for global cultural trends—which are frequently driven by Western influences—to spread widely and undermine regional customs and identities. The embrace of global consumer behaviours, fashion, and entertainment are examples of this tendency, which can occasionally result in the dilution of indigenous customs and the demise of regional languages. Social media nevertheless also play a significant role in promoting cultural diversity. It promotes deeper understanding and respect for other cultures by giving people and groups the capacity to record, share, and celebrate their different cultural heritages. Moreover, social media requires a delicate balance because of its dual nature, which allows it to simultaneously homogenize and diversify. Careful navigation is required to ensure that local identities are maintained and respected, even if there is previously unknown potential for cultural innovation, creativity, and international cooperation. Preventing the marginalization of specific cultural groups may be achieved by addressing the digital divide and ensuring equitable access and representation for all populations. Careful involvement and proactive strategies are necessary to maximize the benefits of social media while reducing its peril. To encourage polite cross-cultural communication, close the digital gap, and ensure the financial stability of those who produce cultural material, social media companies, governments, and cultural organisations must work together. By doing so, we can support the development of a digital environment that honours cultural variety and ensures that regional customs remain alive. In conclusion, social media is a double-edged sword in the globalization era. Its impact on cultural diversity and homogeneity illustrates the necessity of a well-rounded strategy that protects the distinctive identities that make up our shared cultural legacy while maximizing its potential for cultural enrichment. Through deliberate efforts and cooperative projects, we may successfully negotiate this challenging environment and advance a future that is more varied and inclusive culturally.

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