

# Promotion of Intangible Heritage on Social Media



Arabela Briciu , Victor-Alexandru Briciu , Adina Nicoleta Candrea, Mihai Lucian Pascu, Androniki Kavoura , and Lavinia Constantinescu

**Abstract** This paper explores the role of social media platforms in promoting and preserving intangible heritage, a key element of local, regional, and national identity. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok enhance the visibility and appreciation of traditions, customs, and artistic expressions while encouraging their transmission to future generations. Through engaging and interactive content, we can capture the attention of young audiences and stimulate interest in local traditions and practices. The paper distinguishes between “intangible heritage,” which includes a wide range of community practices and traditions, and “intangible cultural heritage,” which refers explicitly to UNESCO-recognized heritage of universal value. In the digital age, adapting heritage promotion strategies to social media is crucial for engaging younger audiences. Given the cultural significance of intangible heritage and its growing role in promoting tourism, examining how it is conveyed through social networks is essential. This paper presents an exploratory case study of the Museum of Canvases and Stories in Mândra, Romania, focusing on using platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to promote intangible heritage, highlighting key strategies such as increasing visibility through multimedia content, stimulating participation with online contests and workshops, and preserving practices in digital formats. The case study aims to (i) identify the intangible heritage elements highlighted on social media and (ii) analyze the methods used by the museum to promote these elements across its social media channels employing a quantitative and thematic content analysis. The conclusion emphasizes that effectively leveraging social media is essential for preserving and transmitting intangible heritage and offers recommendations for maximizing its outreach and impact.

**Keywords** Intangible heritage · Social media · Promotion

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A. Briciu · V.-A. Briciu (✉) · A. N. Candrea · M. L. Pascu  
Transilvania University of Brasov, Brasov, Romania  
e-mail: [victor.briciu@unitbv.ro](mailto:victor.briciu@unitbv.ro)

A. Kavoura  
University of West Attica, Aigaleo, Greece

L. Constantinescu  
“1 Decembrie 1918”, University of Alba Iulia, Alba Iulia, Romania

# 1 Introduction and Background of Research

The concept of “cultural heritage” has evolved significantly in recent decades, influenced in part by the frameworks developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Cultural heritage now encompasses not only monuments and collections of objects but also intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which is transmitted across generations and continually recreated by communities in response to their environment, history, and interactions. This transmission fosters a sense of identity and continuity, promoting cultural diversity and human creativity [1].

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) includes practices, knowledge, skills, and expressions that communities recognize as part of their cultural legacy. It comprises oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, nature-related knowledge, and craftsmanship. ICH is characterized by four key features: it is traditional yet dynamic, inclusive, representative through community transmission, and community-based, requiring recognition by those who maintain it [2].

To ensure its survival, ICH must remain relevant to its community, continuously recreated and passed on to future generations. Without intervention, certain aspects of ICH may risk disappearing. Safeguarding measures are thus essential, involving the transfer of knowledge, skills, and meaning. Such measures focus on reinforcing the conditions necessary for the ongoing evolution and interpretation of ICH, ensuring its transmission to future generations [3].

Intangible heritage is generally understood through a descriptive definition of “intangible or immaterial cultural heritage.” This concept is mainly confined to more “specialized” circles and has gained normative significance since adopting the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. While “national and material heritage” is often closely tied to a specific geographical area, the intangible heritage of communities transcends territorial boundaries and reflects a dynamic, ever-evolving culture [4]. Preserving such heritage promotes national identity awareness and long-term economic and social development within local communities.

In the digital age, utilizing technology to safeguard intangible heritage (IH) has become a key research focus. However, in the context of globalization and shifting societal dynamics, IH preservation faces significant challenges due to its reliance on oral transmission and experiential knowledge, making it vulnerable to change and potential loss [5]. In the Internet era, disseminating IH through social media is essential [6], as it allows for both the widespread distribution of cultural heritage and the bridging of gaps between the public and cultural institutions [7]. Social media platforms can enhance public engagement with heritage and serve as effective tools for its preservation and promotion [8, 9].

This study examines how social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, are used to promote and preserve ICH, with a focus on the Museum of Canvases and Stories in Mândra, Romania. The article aims to (i) identify the ICH elements highlighted by the museum on social media and (ii) analyze the

strategies used to increase visibility, encourage community engagement, and ensure the preservation of these cultural practices in digital formats. Through quantitative and thematic content analysis, the study illustrates how social media can be an effective tool for cultural preservation, contributing to community development, cultural tourism, and economic opportunities.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social Media and ICH**

Preserving intangible heritage (IH) poses a significant challenge for nations committed to safeguarding this crucial aspect of cultural identity. Recent scholarly discourse has increasingly emphasized the need to explore the transformative impact of the Internet on heritage preservation efforts [5]. The proliferation of new information and communication technologies, particularly social media, presents substantial opportunities to bridge the divide between traditional cultural practices and modern society. These digital platforms open new pathways for preserving and promoting ICH, enabling more comprehensive public access and engagement that previously needed to be attainable.

Liang et al. [10] conceptualize social media as any digital tool that allows users to efficiently create and share content with a broad audience, spanning a range of platforms such as (1) photo-sharing applications like Instagram and Flickr, (2) video and audio-sharing services such as YouTube, (3) platforms for short written messages like Facebook and Twitter, and (4) applications offering geo-location sharing and social interaction functionalities. These tools collectively cultivate a dynamic environment where cultural content can reach diverse audiences, further facilitating the dissemination of heritage knowledge.

Social media thus emerges as a critical medium for transmitting and promoting ICH, supporting its continuity, protection, and accessibility across generations [11]. By enabling the cross-generational and cross-border transfer of intangible cultural assets, social media plays a key role in ensuring the sustained relevance and accessibility of cultural heritage in the digital era, helping it adapt and resonate with contemporary audiences while fostering cultural understanding and continuity [12].

### **2.2 User-Generated-Content (UGC) and IH Promotion and Safeguarding**

Social media users contribute to and create online content by liking and sharing content from other users, enabling the exchange and generation of content on the Internet. As social media is designed as a participatory medium, users are expected to

participate through various social activities such as sharing and contributing contextual information, such as photos, connecting with friends and family, and looking for other information as reference material. For that reason, there are opportunities for social media users as the audience to be introduced to and given awareness of the cultural heritage [13].

There is a great deal of opportunity for participation in social media use and in addressing cultural heritage since people are keen to get pertinent real-time information and participate in the planning process [14, 15]. In contemporary digital society, social media function as critical tools for societal dialogue. Analyzing these platforms provides valuable insights into their structure and their historical and prospective implications [16]. As stated by Stuedahl [17], social media and social networking have become integral to digital cultural heritage communication, especially within Web 2.0 phenomena, which include platforms such as blogs, wikis, Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube.

The diversity of online social media platforms has enabled organizations tasked with communicating and promoting intangible cultural heritage to reach broader audiences, thereby significantly narrowing, or in some cases entirely eliminating, the divide between these institutions and their target publics [7].

Intangible cultural heritage can strengthen its connection with audiences on new media platforms like social media and online communities. These platforms make it easier for audiences to access information about intangible cultural heritage and engage with fellow enthusiasts. The interactive and participatory nature of this mode of communication can effectively boost the awareness and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage among young people [18].

### 3 Methodological Considerations

Yin [19] defines a case study as a research strategy involving empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. This approach allows for detailed exploration, integrating multiple sources—such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual material—to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

The case study methodology facilitates the formulation of explanatory generalizations beyond mere description, allowing for interpretation within broader theoretical frameworks. This capacity enables case studies to transcend specific contexts, contributing to theory by drawing insights applicable to similar settings.

This study employs quantitative and thematic content analysis of social media posts from the Museum of Canvases and Stories in Mândra, Țara Făgărașului, covering its outreach across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This analysis provides a comprehensive look at the museum's digital engagement strategies.

Recognized as a cultural hub in the Făgăraș region, the Museum of Canvases and Stories goes beyond preserving local traditions by supporting cultural identity and community engagement. With its focus on intangible heritage, the museum holds potential for promoting cultural tourism and regional development. By linking traditional practices with modern digital outreach, it strengthens its role as an influential institution in the area's social and economic growth [20].

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Case Study Setting

The Museum of Canvases and Stories [21], located in the village of Mândra in the Țara Făgărașului (Făgăraș Land) region, is a unique cultural center dedicated to preserving and promoting local traditions and narratives. Founded by the Zară family, the museum distinguishes itself through its collections of historical canvases and dowry pieces specific to the area, alongside educational and creative activities under the Mândra Chic brand. Situated in the historic house of Mother Ruța, built with funds from transatlantic migration in the early twentieth century, the museum revitalizes an important part of the region's history. It also hosts innovative projects such as "Mother Ruța's Suveica around the world," symbolically connecting local values with a global audience.

The museum plays a vital role in safeguarding the intangible heritage of the Făgăraș region, acting as a cultural bridge across generations. Its activities include sewing, restoration, and local gastronomy workshops aimed at preserving and promoting crafts and traditions, reinforcing community identity, and ensuring the continuity of the region's cultural heritage [20]. Additionally, through the Mândra Chic brand, the museum integrates traditional warping, sewing, and embroidery techniques into modern clothing designs, making them appealing to younger generations.

The museum also organizes workshops that revitalize traditional crafts, often led by elderly women from the community, reminiscent of rural gatherings. These initiatives target both adults and children, fostering engagement with traditional practices. A dedicated space for local stories' transcripts further strengthens the local cultural identity.

### 4.2 Social Media Content Analysis

The museum has been present on YouTube since May 2009 with the channel "Museum of Canvases and Stories," and in 2016, it opened a second channel, "Mândra Chic." Although the second channel also has 31 videos and only 61 subscribers, only

the original museum’s channel, with 620 subscribers, is presented in the analysis. The next account developed was Facebook in August 2011, followed by Instagram in April 2015, and TikTok on June 13, 2021.

The table below summarizes the data covered in this analysis. We can observe the impact of the posts and the engagement of the audience. Regarding the founding date and the number of posts, we can observe that the impact of the posts on TikTok and Instagram is higher; these are the networks preferred by the young audience (Table 1).

The social media content analyzed across various platforms addresses similar themes with specific nuances based on each platform’s infrastructure, characteristics, and target audience. The recurring themes identified in the museum’s social media promotion include the following: local crafts (sewing, yarn warping, local gastronomy, and other traditional crafts), village events (celebrations, young men’s caroling, weekly dances at the Cultural Camp), local stories, inherited dowries (mainly traditional clothing), educational events for children and adults, embroidery techniques, and clothing pieces adorned with traditional embroidery. Each platform demonstrates distinct characteristics: Instagram (@mandrachic) primarily promotes the Mândra Chic brand, with a strong focus on product promotion. Although community engagement is higher on this platform, many comments are commercial, often inquiries about product pricing, and less focused on intangible heritage. The most popular post, a giveaway, garnered 595 likes. Much of the content centers around traditional-style clothing and accessories developed at the museum. Facebook (@Mândra Chic) promotes center events and stories from the local community to remind the community of regional traditions and customs. The most liked post (442 likes) features a wedding event where men performed a traditional dance, evoking positive comments, including nostalgic reflections on past cultural practices. TikTok

**Table 1** Social media engagement metrics

Joined the channel		YouTube	TikTok	Facebook	Instagram
		May 28, 2009	June 13, 2021	August 15, 2011	April 2015
No. subscribers/followers		620 subscribers	1,7 K followers	19 k followers	8,5 K followers
No. of posts		30	116 videos	1,76 K	1,7 K
No. views	Total	282,1 K	612,2 K	–	–
	Average	9,32 K/post	5,3 K	–	–
	Minimum	87	283	–	–
	Maximum	172 K	113,4 K	–	–
Engagement: appreciation	Total	–	17,5 K	14,4 K	123,3 K
	Average	–	148/post	85/post	71/post
Engagement: comments	Total	–	360	7165	5357
	Average	–	3/post	5/post	3/post

(@mandrachic), being a more interactive platform, showcases a high number of views and engagement, particularly on posts demonstrating traditional practices, such as the wool carpet washing technique. Dance videos from the region also attract substantial interaction, with a strong emphasis on community participation in center activities. YouTube (@Muzeul de Pânze și Povești Mândra), the oldest but least active channel, serves primarily as a repository for local memories. Comments are disabled on this platform. The videos document village life, the preservation of traditions and crafts, and local histories shared by community elders, considered “living treasures.”

## 5 Discussion and Conclusions

Analyzing social media activity across platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram reveals significant insights into how these channels contribute to preserving and promoting intangible heritage. These digital platforms serve as dynamic spaces for building cultural awareness and promoting community engagement. With 19,000 followers on Facebook and 8,500 on Instagram, the museum has successfully reached diverse audiences, making local traditions more accessible. With over 612,000 views, TikTok mainly attracts younger users, showcasing traditional practices in engaging formats and inviting deeper interaction. Meanwhile, YouTube serves as a repository for local memories, with 282,100 total views, documenting village life and cultural expressions.

Promoting intangible heritage through social media raises awareness and supports the community’s long-term social and economic development. By highlighting local crafts, traditional events, and community stories, the museum fosters a sense of national and regional identity, which can drive cultural tourism and related economic opportunities. Instagram’s engagement metrics, particularly the 123,300 total likes on posts showcasing traditional clothing, illustrate the platform’s potential to generate interest in heritage-based products and align cultural preservation with economic viability.

Moreover, social media enables new sharing and interaction related to traditional cultural expressions. TikTok, in particular, excels at fostering community participation through its visually engaging content, attracting significant attention to posts that showcase traditional practices. This approach not only makes heritage practices more accessible but also encourages intergenerational dialogue, as younger users engage with the content in meaningful ways.

Ultimately, the museum’s social media strategy exemplifies the effectiveness of digital platforms in preserving, promoting, and transmitting intangible heritage. By leveraging each platform’s unique capabilities, the museum raises awareness of local traditions, encourages community engagement, and adapts cultural practices for contemporary audiences. This approach underscores the importance of integrating new forms of media into heritage preservation strategies, ensuring that intangible heritage continues to thrive in the digital age.

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