

Patrick Niyogitare

Bridge2Rwanda Leadership Academy

Research writing

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## The Evolving Role of Social Media in the African Culture Promotion and Preservation

### **Introduction**

Africa is a continent with diverse cultures, art, and traditions. It is a land of many countries, beautiful natural nature, and an array of native species. According to the paper Internet in Africa written by Michiel Hegener, a newspaper and article writer, the internet in Africa was first introduced in 1995, making Ghana the first country to access a permanent internet connection (Internet Society, 2022). Since then, internet-based technology has started growing day by day. The internet started allowing Africans to create and access solutions that require an internet connection. The rise of social media followed the booming internet usage in Africa. According to the research (Maryville University, 2021), the rise of social media usage started with digital communication through email, bulletin board messaging, and real-time online chatting. In Africa, it was around 2010 when social media platforms like Yahoo, Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube started trending. The dramatic increase in smartphone access also led to more people creating social media accounts in Africa. A significant number of those were youth. African government organizations, boards, service sectors, and private sectors also started using social media. Africans' ability to use social media efficiently and the continent's rapid growth have played a big part in preserving and advancing African culture.

The African culture is a multi-cultural diversity expressed in different forms such as languages, arts, songs, dances, customs, and values. The rich and varied African culture differs

from one nation to the next and inside each nation. Each ethnic group's culture is centered on the family, seen in each group's art, music, and oral literature (Elrashdi, 2021). Africans have created a social media culture deeply rooted in face-to-face communication and community building. Social media platforms in Africa are not reshaping African culture but evolving it. This paper discusses the role of social media in promoting African culture through arts, dressing, and songs; and the significant role social media plays in preserving and strengthening African cultural values and customs.

### **Social media played a role in promoting African ethnic arts, attire, and music.**

Social media platforms allow African content producers to develop works promoting African culture. However, it also extends the culture's limits outside the continent. In 1878 an American explorer, Sir Henry Morton Stanley, named Africa a Dark Continent because it was poorly known (Pimm, 2007). Minimal resources at that time could communicate the nature of the culture and lifestyle of the Africans. However, today Social media has helped to promote African culture in a new way. People who have never been to Africa can now see what it is like, and feel like they are a part of that culture without having to go there and experience it firsthand. It is especially true for young people, who are more likely than others to use social media to connect with their peers. As a result, social media usage has grown, promoting the culture and removing the term "dark continent" from the description of Africa.

Modern African photographers use social media such as Instagram to communicate African stories from an African perspective. These photographers defy stereotypes and illuminate what they see as the true face of Africa (McDonald, 2016). Instagram and flickr.com are social media platforms allowing African artists to upload their art pieces to be shown to millions of users following their accounts. The same platforms also allow African fashion

designers to share African-style dressings worldwide. The unique African music style is another element of African culture. Social media platforms like Youtube, Vimeo, and Spotify allow African music artists to share these artistic songs that advance African culture. The evolution of platforms that allow people to share artistic works in the form of music or clothing is another way to enhance the promotion of African culture.

**Social media played a role in preserving and strengthening African values and customs.**

The African culture is composed of multiple social and moral values closely related. From a paper African Culture and Values by Gabriel E. Idang, people's values might be viewed as part of their culture since culture is sometimes defined as the compilation of the peculiarities shared by a people (Gabriel E, 2015). Among those African cultural values, there is communication. The use of communication in the African community has been all about sharing ideas and solving problems in the community. Communication is an integral part of socialization in Africa, and with this comes the importance of understanding each other's culture, values, and customs. For example, The Yoruba tribe believes that communication is essential to being successful in life. They believe that by sharing their knowledge and experiences with others, they will be able to create a better world for themselves and future generations (Akanmu & Rasheed, 2017). Social media integration into African life introduced a new communication channel where communication between families and people, in general, is maintained regardless of geographical barriers or the distance between them. Social media use has undoubtedly contributed to the preservation of cultural values in communication and those related to cooperation and interdependence as well as intervention.

Some African countries governments are advocating to preserve the culture. The 2nd International Conference held on April 18 and 19, 2019, in Rabat (Morocco) discussed the

African role and responsibility of local and subnational governments in the preservation and valorization of cultural heritage where African nations set a commitment to preserve the culture (UCLG Africa, 2019). In achieving cultural preservation, the use of social media plays a significant role. Because several government boards and ministries in charge of culture have established profiles on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, providing resources and information that preserves the culture, social media has become a valuable tool for cultural preservation. Rwanda is a typical example, where the ministry in charge of youth and culture uses the Twitter platform to disseminate information that enables Rwandans, particularly young people, to stay current with culture. The social media platform offers a useful means to engage the community while committing to preserving cultural values.

### **Conclusion**

In Africa, many countries have distinct histories and cultures, but they all have one thing in common: they are African. The diversity of African culture is caused by the fact that it is a continent—and there are so many different ethnic groups with different languages and customs. The arrival of internet connection was followed by the rise of social media usage in Africa. The youth in Africa are accountable for being the ones who use social media mostly. Since they can access it using their reasonably priced and user-friendly phones and pads. That also means they can connect with friends, family members, and other people through this medium. Additionally, it has altered the way people interact with one another and how they see themselves as individuals. They now have a new means of self-expression through which they can communicate their feelings and thoughts to those around them.

Social media platforms like Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have been used to promote African cultural arts, dressing, and music to the world outside of Africa. Social media

has provided a forum for Africans to share their culture with others, which has made this possible. That allows them to communicate with individuals from all over the world, regardless of their language, who are interested in learning more about them, thereby promoting African culture. Social media integration in Africa made it hard to protect some values, and African cultural values preservation has been made much easier. Communication as an African cultural value has made it easier where people can share ideas and news; electronically meeting regardless of the distance between them or the geographical distance. Social media also allowed the African government boards in charge of culture preservation to share necessary information with their people through social media platforms. That exemplifies how social media is used to uphold cultural values. While the improper use of social media in Africa leads to the destruction of some traditional values, the effective use of it has enabled the continent to market its culture internationally.

## Works Cited

Akanmu, D., & Rasheed, D. (2017). Language and culture among the Yoruba. in language and culture among the yoruba: a study of argot, cant, jargons, and slang as forerunners of the new idioms and idiomatic expression in the 21st century (1st ed.). European Centre for Research Training and Development UK.

<http://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/Language-And-Culture-Among-The-Yoruba.pdf>

Elrashdi, Ayoub. "African Culture: Versatile Approach to Realize Africa We Want." African union-un, May 25, 2021,

[www.africanunion-un.org/post/african-culture-versatile-approach-to-realize-the-Africa-we-want](http://www.africanunion-un.org/post/african-culture-versatile-approach-to-realize-the-Africa-we-want).

Gabriel E. "AFRICAN CULTURE AND VALUES." <https://www.researchgate.net/>, 2015,

[www.researchgate.net/publication/317449404\\_African\\_culture\\_and\\_values](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/317449404_African_culture_and_values).

Internet Society. "History of the Internet in Africa." *Internet Society*, 21 Mar. 2022,

[www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-of-the-internet-in-africa](http://www.internetsociety.org/internet/history-of-the-internet-in-africa).

Maryville University. "The Evolution of Social Media: How Did It Begin and Where Could It

Go Next?" Maryville Online, March 3 March 3, 2021,

[online.maryville.edu/blog/evolution-social-media](http://online.maryville.edu/blog/evolution-social-media).

McDonald. "Want to See the Real Africa? Eight Instagram Accounts to Follow."

<https://www.concern.net>, 15 Sept. 2016,

[www.concern.net/news/want-to-see-the-real-africa-eight-instagram-accounts-to-follow](http://www.concern.net/news/want-to-see-the-real-africa-eight-instagram-accounts-to-follow).

Pimm. (2007, June). Africa: Still the "Dark Continent." <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>.  
<https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1523-1739.2007.00697.x#:~:text=Henry%20Stanley%20named%20Africa%20%E2%80%9CThe.European%20powers%20pleasure%20and%20profit.>

UCLG Africa. (2019, April 22, April 22). African local governments commit to preserving the continent's cultural heritage. <https://www2.fundsforngos.org/>.  
<https://www.uclga.org/news/african-local-governments-commit-to-preserving-the-continents-cultural-heritage/>