

# The use of social media in Intangible Cultural Heritage presentation



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## Abstract

Globalization and the mixture of different cultures lead to a risk that intangible cultural heritage may be lost. Nowadays social media platforms and its importance in modern society in various fields can be a useful tool in protection of intangible cultural heritage through its dissemination. This study aimed to identify and analyse the existing social media platforms that are more suited to publish tourism and hospitality related content.

It is believed that this study will contribute to a better understanding of the importance of social media usage in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage worldwide, as well as the selection of which social media to use.

Key-words: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Social media; Advantages of social media; ICH dissemination.

## Background

The focus on ICH follows the publication of the Convention for World Heritage in 1972, which expressed the concern in the preservation and protection of relevant heritage assets. In 2001 UNESCO created the Section on Intangible Cultural Heritage, which triggered it to be considered a priority to the enrichment of cultural diversity and human creativity, resulting in the publication of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. In this convention, the concept of intangible cultural heritage is defined as “(...) *the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that communities, groups and, as the case may be, individuals recognize it as being an integral part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, passed on from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, instilling a sense of identity and continuity, thus contributing, to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity*” (p.4).

The "intangible cultural heritage" is defined in the following areas:

- (a) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as the vector of intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) Performing arts;
- (c) Social practices, rituals and festive acts;



- (d) Knowledge and uses related to nature and the universe;
- (e) Traditional craft technique.

According to UNESCO, ICH encompasses living traditions inherited from our ancestors, such as social practices, rituals and festivals. It is a key element in helping intercultural dialogue and mutual respect for different lifestyles.

In this context, Lei et al. (2021) conducted a Bibliometric Analysis from 2001 to 2020 on gastronomy as a sign of the Identity and Cultural Heritage of Tourist Destinations and stressed the scarcity of literature on this topic.

Based on this limited amount of literature, it was attempted to find definitions of traditional gastronomy as cultural heritage.

Traditional gastronomy is defined by several authors, according to the summary by Guerrero et. al (2009), as: the representation of a group, linked to a territory and used by the community, being transmitted between generations.

Ćirković (2016) further introduces the idea that traditional cuisine can be associated with a ritual, reinforcing that the preservation of ritual food preparation makes one community distinct from another. Vanhonacker et al. (2010, p. 453), for example, gave the following definition of traditional gastronomy: *“A traditional food product is a product frequently consumed or associated to specific celebrations and/or seasons, transmitted from one generation to another, made in a specific way according to gastronomic heritage, naturally processed, and distinguished and known because of its sensory properties and associated to a certain local area, region or country”*.

There are many common characteristics given by different authors between ritual food and traditional gastronomy, so we defined ritual food as follows:

Ritual food is recognized by communities, groups or individuals as part of their cultural heritage, being a part of rituals, celebrations and festive events, involving traditional and artisanal cooking techniques, the result of the nation history, symbolic value and memory of a given region, being at risk of disappearing, and transmitted from generation to generation.

Even though UNESCO created the Section on Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001, gastronomy heritage was not fully recognized until 2010. It happened when UNESCO included the traditional Mexican cuisine and the gastronomic meal of the French.

According to Romagnoli (2019), for ICH to be recognized there were two key moments: a letter to UNESCO and a mobilization in Morocco. The letter was sent from the Minister of External Relations and Religious Affairs of Bolivia to the UNESCO General Director in 1973, where there was an urge for international support by nations worldwide to take action to protect folklore against exploitation and misappropriation. In 1997, in Morocco, there was a mobilization of the civil society to save the square Jemaa el Fna (Marrakesh), which was a



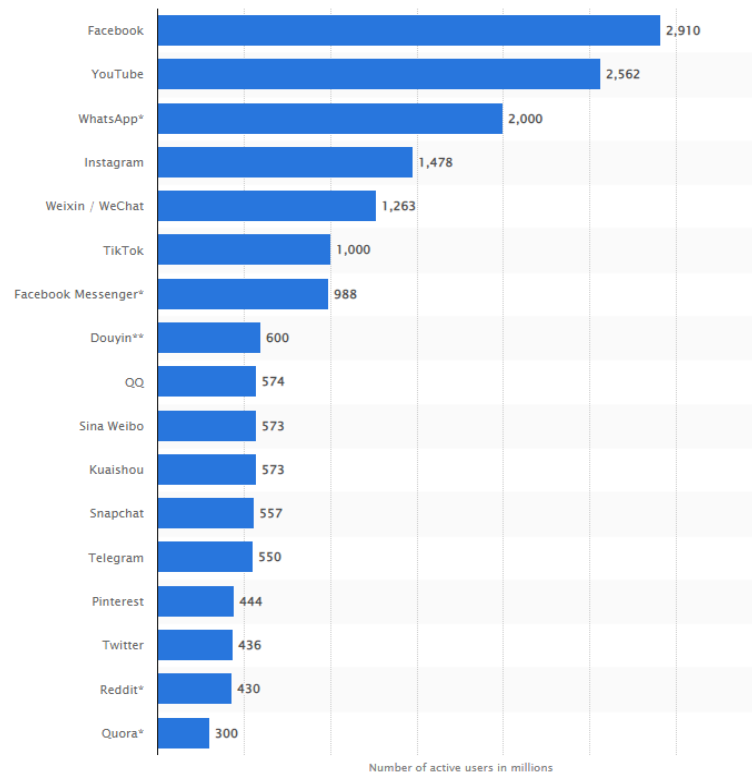
fundamental international call for action to the setting up of the UNESCO programme for the 'Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'.

Attempts to include a specific dish in the UNESCO list demonstrate the risk of losing these dishes and the need for their protection as an intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, due to the globalization and mixture of different cultures the risk of losing an original recipe increases. Skublewska-Paszowska et. al (2022), defines preserving as the deliberate act of keeping cultural heritage from the past for the future and can encompass documentation, protection, reconstruction, restoration, conservation, dissemination and spreading. However, intangible cultural heritage is more difficult to preserve than tangible heritage, being intangible heritage often lost in transmission to younger generations.

## **Social media**

Given the globalization and wide use of the technologies nowadays, social media's role is crucial in this context, according to UNESCO (2003), is also a way to preserve and even strengthen the traditions of communities as a whole, such as with the presence of videos, images and audios.

According to Statista Research Department (2022), in April 2022 there were 4.65 billion active users on social media, which represents 58.7% of the global population. Statista Research Department (2022) states that in January 2022, the three most popular social media globally used were, in order, Facebook, Youtube and Whatsapp.



**Figure 1 - Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users**

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)

Social media platforms are applications involving the use of the Internet that, according to Kaplan (2015), integrate Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. According to Hammou et al. (2020), social media will be a tool for the communication of intangible cultural heritage that enables its transmission, safeguarding and promotion. For example, in the study done by the author on the promotion of handicrafts from Marrakech through social media, it was stated that communication through social media is of utmost importance for the promotion of products, especially to the younger generation (Hammou et al., 2020). This type of applications have made it easier to create and share content, which is also interactive, and therefore its growth is noted among the general population.

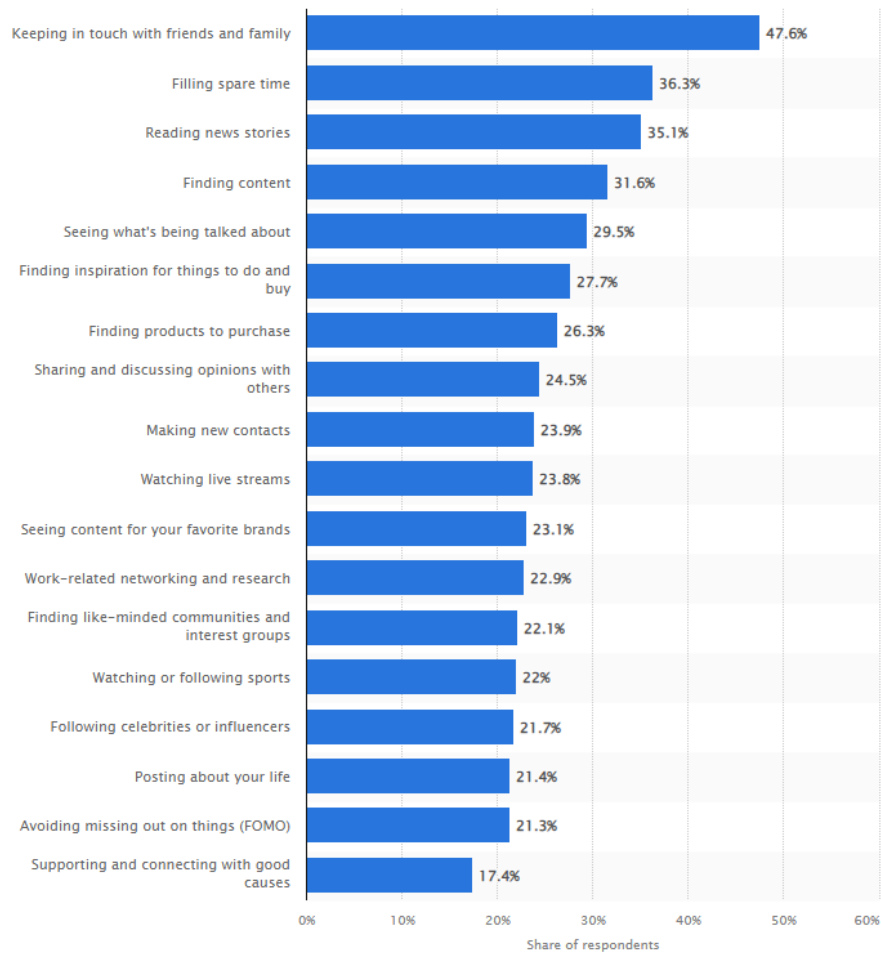
In accordance with Vassiliadis & Belenioti (2017), social media promotes dialogue, real time communication, engagement with tourists and facilitates the interpretation of cultural experience. This way, social media enables a participating learning process. For example, YouTube is reported by the same authors as a very dynamic tool, using as an example the Indianapolis Museum and the ZKM - Center for Art and Media, where the employees have to upload one video per day regarding these museums.

Several international organizations, such as IGCAT - International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism, EUREGA, UCCN – UNESCO Creative Cities



Network, UNWTO and SlowFood-CE, use social media to promote intangible cultural heritage, making their content more easily accessible to a wider range of different countries. In the data retrieved from their websites, it was possible to verify that the social media platforms used are mainly Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter. Also, browsing their websites, content in video form was noticed to be a recurrent useful tool do disseminate important information.

It is of great importance to identify the reasons why social media users resort to these types of platforms, in order to adapt the type of content produced.



**Figure 2 - Most popular reasons for internet users worldwide to use social media in 2021**

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)

According to this data, which includes people from 16 to 64 years old, keeping in touch with friends and family is the most popular reason for the usage of social media, followed by the filling of spare time.

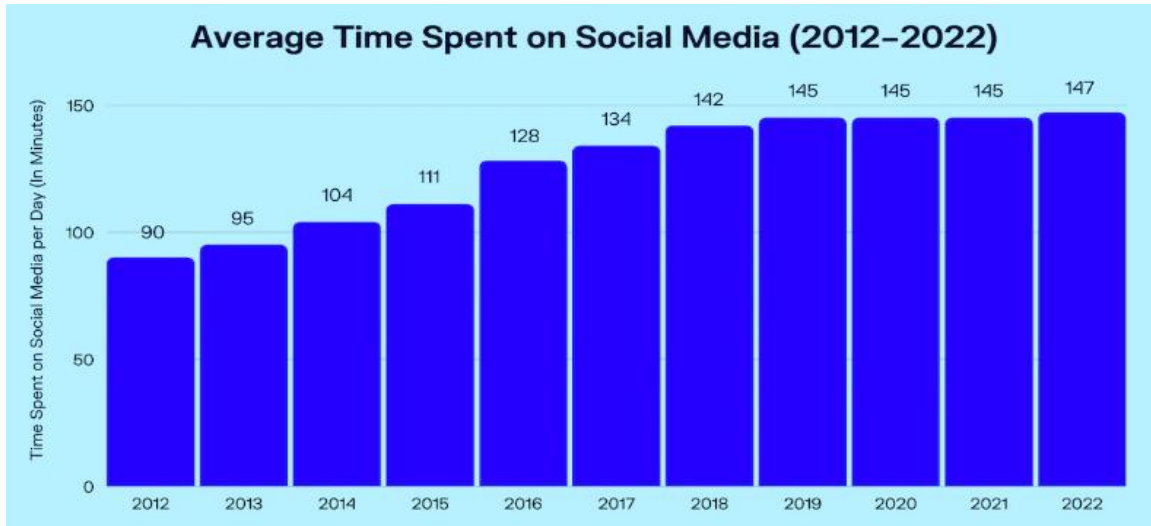


Figure 3 - Average time spent on social media a day from 2012 to 2022

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)

It's also possible to verify that from 2012 to 2018 there was a significant growth in the total amount of time spent on social media and in 2022 there was another growth, being the most recent data equal to two hours and 27 minutes a day.

Since Facebook was corroborated to be the most used social media worldwide, some specific data was collected about this social media.

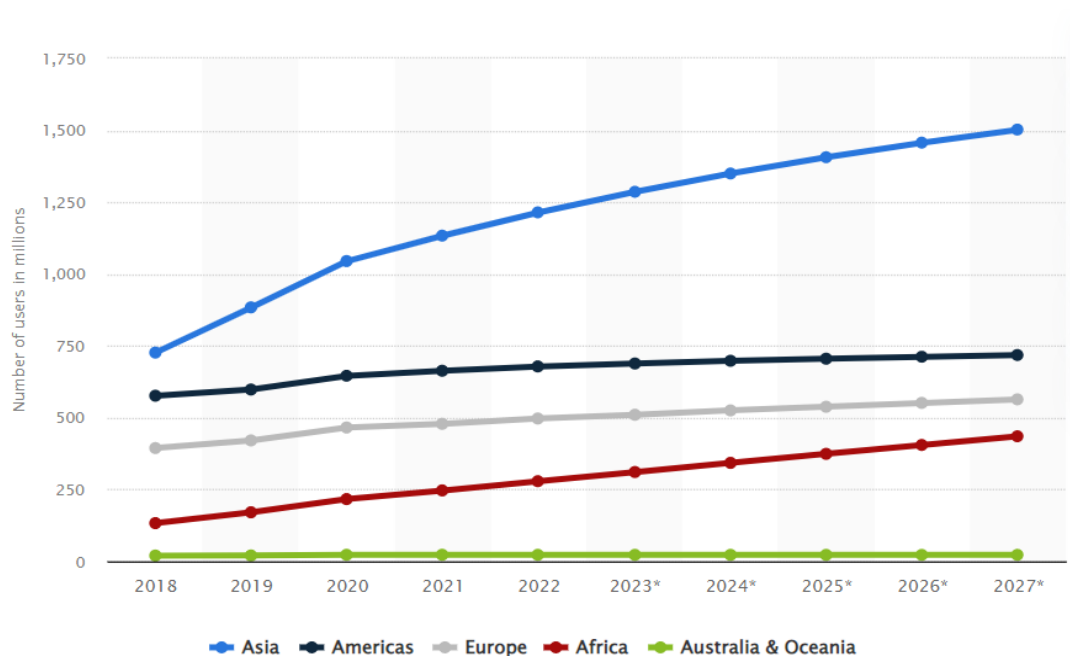


Figure 4 - Number of Facebook users worldwide, by region

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)



This figure presents the data on use of Facebook in different regions from 2018 until 2022 and a prediction until 2027. It can be seen that there is a constant tendency of growing usage of this social media. Asia is the leader in Facebook users, followed by Americas and Europe.

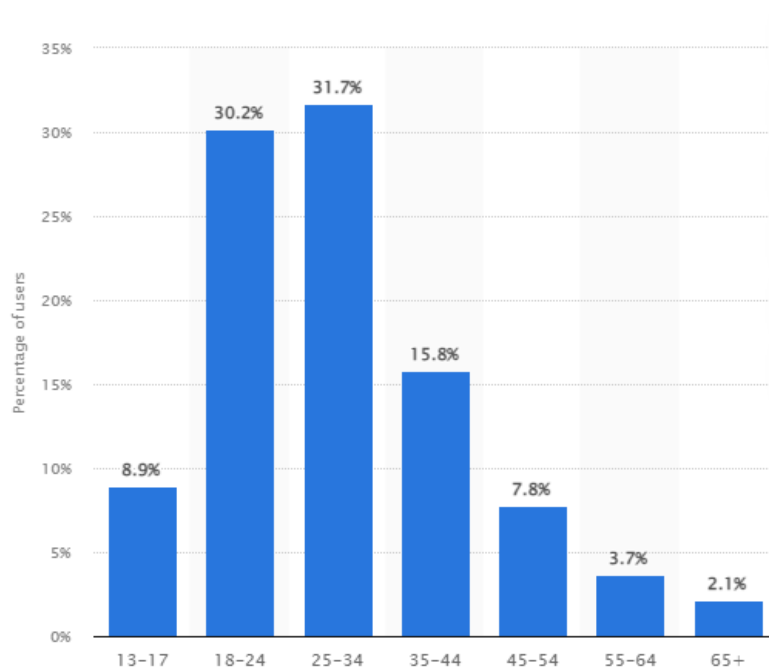


**Figure 5 - YouTube presence worldwide in 2021**

Source: Oberlo (2022a)

Statistics demonstrate that YouTube was available in more than 100 countries in 80 different languages in 2021. According to Oberlo (2022), even though most published videos are not in English, English-language videos tend to receive around four times more views than videos in other languages.

Instagram is also a widely used social media that deserves attention.



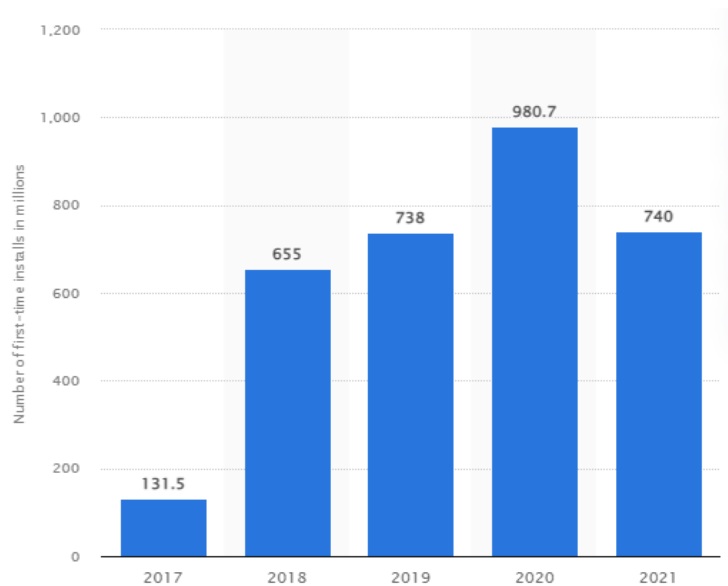


**Figure 6 - Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of April 2022, by age group**

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)

It's possible to confirm that the age group from 25 to 34 years old is the most present in Instagram usage, followed by the age group from 18 to 24.

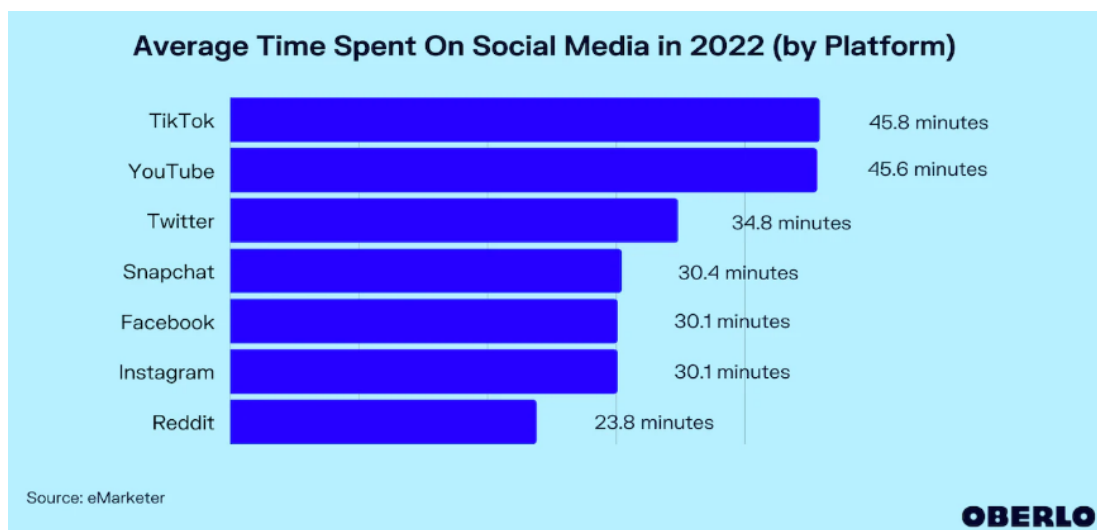
TikTok is also a matter of attention due to its fast growth in recent years, therefore some statistics were researched.



**Figure 7 - Number of first-time TikTok installs from 2017 to 2021**

Source: Statista Research Department (2022)

A big adhesion is notable especially in the year of 2020. Even though in the next year the number of first-time users has decreased, TikTok is still one of the 6th most used social media worldwide.

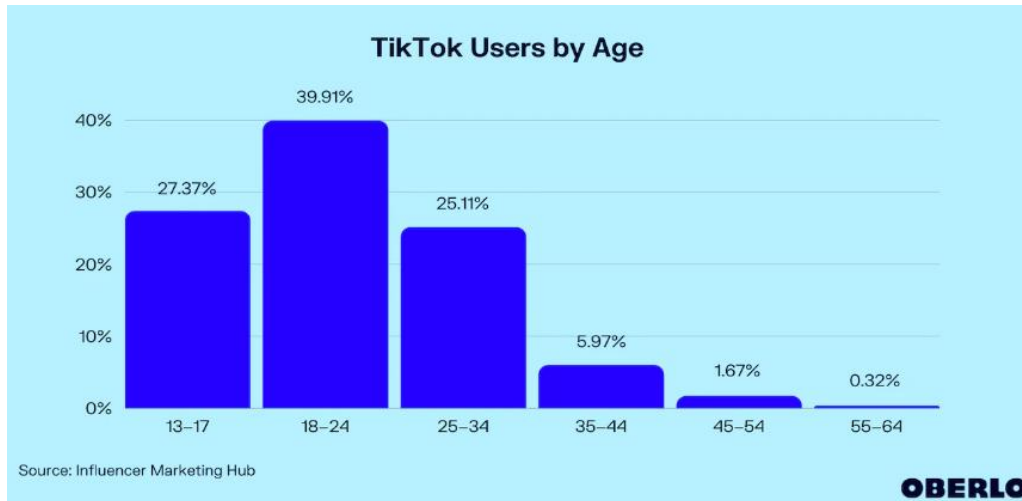




**Figure 8 - Average time spent on social media worldwide in 2022, by platform**

Source: Oberlo (2022b)

Observing the figure above, it's possible to see that TikTok is the social media in which people spend more time in, with a total of 45.8 minutes a day.



**Figure 9 - TikTok users by age**

Source: Oberlo (2022c)

TikTok is a social network more targeted to younger people. Its use predominates in age groups between 13 and 24 years old, representing a total of 67.28% of its users.

## Recommendations on social media usage to disseminate ICH

It is of high importance to use global networks in order to increase the global impact.

According to the data analysed previously, it is notable that the average time on social media has been increasing over time. That being said, and given that there is a growing tendency in using different social media worldwide, it is recommended to disseminate the project results in the highly used ones.

Also, finding content and finding inspiration for things to do and buy were two of the top reasons for people to use social media. In this sense, we can see that people look online for new information and things to explore and ICH can be integrated in this new content that they are looking for.

To our knowledge and taking into account that there is a very limited information on social media usage for ritual food content, some social networks were highlighted as a good tool to disseminate Intangible Cultural Heritage.



Therefore, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and TikTok are the ones we recommend to disseminate the ritual recipes videos, produced by different European countries in the frame of the Eurica project.

The advantages of using social media are described below.

### **Facebook**

One advantage of Facebook is that it is a multifunction network, where you can publish all types of content, comment and share on it. Besides the entertainment component, it also presents a professional tool for many industries, including the tourism and hospitality related ones.

Facebook has many functionalities, including direct hosting of videos. Although this option is subject to a chronological disappearance, it has the advantage that Facebook increases the possibility of videos appearing in the chronologies of people who like the pages, presenting the publication in an attractive way.

Given that it's possible to verify a growth of the Facebook users number over the years and a prediction of continuing growing at least until 2027, we recommend it as a valuable platform to disseminate content to a wider number of people from all over the world.

### **YouTube**

YouTube is a video platform with an overwhelming amount of traffic, and the second largest search engine after Google.

Viewers are often looking for informative content, mainly tutorials, reviews, and releases. Internet users circulate the videos by sharing them with others, multiplying the dissemination effect. As verified in the previous data, it reaches countries all over the world and is easily accessible.

English, being a universal language, is the main language to have a content in, or at least provide subtitles in this language, so that the content is more likely to be seen worldwide.

### **Instagram**

Instagram is a modern and interactive social network, of great expansion with short videos of limited time, which can be an excellent opportunity to disseminate the making of videos, teasers of videos posted on other social media. Similarly to Facebook, it also has Instagram stories, which allow a sharing that draws the attention to a short publication that can be quite attractive.

The researched data on Instagram allows us to understand that this social media is mostly used by young people, concluding that it is a useful tool to captivate the young generation to learn about Intangible Cultural Heritage if the content is short-lived and edited in an appealing way.

### **TikTok**



TikTok is a recent worldwide app that allows users to make a variety of short videos, ranging in length from fifteen seconds to one minute.

This social network is an opportunity to reach the youngest due to its recent attention and fast growth. Also, analyzing the average time spent on this app, is perceived a higher probability of a certain content to be seen by the user. In this app, young people can more likely engage and share content about ICH.

**Concluding, there are some general advantages in the usage of these social networks:**

- Availability in more than 100 languages;
- Possibility to publish photos, videos, written content and interactive content;
- Possibility to use hashtags and share content with others directly or through other platforms;
- Different age ranges;
- Free access;
- Access through several devices (computer, cell phone, tablet);
- Short stories that pop-up in the users' home page;
- Possibility to like and comment on publications, increasing interactivity;
- Availability of tools to directly edit content on the social media platforms;
- Possibility to make live videos.

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