

Cultural echoes in digital spaces: a comparative study of diasporic engagement on social media

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Organization
Management
Journal

Received 3 April 2025
Revised 24 September 2025
28 December 2025
16 March 2026
Accepted 4 April 2026

Abstract

Purpose – Digital platforms have transformed how diasporic communities interact, enabling cultural connectivity, identity preservation and socio-political participation. This study examines the role of social media in shaping digital diasporas through a comparative analysis of four cases: the Indian diaspora in the USA, the Somali diaspora in the UK, the Filipino diaspora in the Middle East and the Chinese diaspora in Australia. This study aims to understand how digital engagement operates across diverse migration conditions and geopolitical contexts rather than assuming demographic equivalence.

Design/methodology/approach – This study adopts a qualitative research design based on thematic analysis of publicly available social media interactions. Case selection captures variation in population scale, digital engagement and migration histories, with population size serving as an empirical baseline rather than a comparative determinant. Data were drawn from globally dominant platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and WeChat – focusing on cultural, political and economic forms of digital participation shaped by host-country environments and transnational practices.

Findings – The analysis identifies recurring patterns of cultural preservation, community support, political engagement and economic participation across the four diasporas. Social media facilitates cultural continuity and collective belonging while also enabling advocacy and transnational networking. At the same time, challenges such as algorithmic bias, misinformation and digital exclusion complicate diasporic interactions, highlighting the uneven visibility and influence of different migrant communities within digital spaces.

Originality/value – This study advances the concept of digital diasporic engagement by foregrounding migration condition as a key analytical variable in comparative analysis. By examining both stable and precarious migration contexts, it demonstrates how similar digital practices produce different outcomes depending on structural constraint and vulnerability. The findings offer original insights for diaspora studies and provide policy-relevant implications for inclusive digital governance and digital literacy initiatives.

Keywords Digital diaspora, Cultural identity, Thematic analysis, Social media, Transnationalism

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Diaspora communities have historically relied on localized social structures to maintain cultural and familial connections (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991). However, the rise of digital platforms has reshaped these traditional modes of engagement, offering virtual



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Declaration of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

Organization Management Journal
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 1541-6518
p-ISSN: 2753-8567
DOI 10.1108/OMJ-03-2025-2500

spaces where communities can interact, share experiences and sustain cultural identities across geographical distances (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Diminescu, 2008). Komito (2019) similarly demonstrates that social media creates parallel virtual communities, allowing migrants to participate in transnational networks while navigating host-country integration. Social media, in particular, has become a powerful tool for preserving heritage, facilitating economic collaboration and mobilizing collective action (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010; Komito, 2019). Alonso & Oiarzabal (2015) further argue that diasporic communities use digital platforms as archives of collective memory, reinforcing cultural continuity in transnational spaces. Digital platforms not only serve as tools for communication but also act as arenas for cultural preservation, economic networking and activism, allowing diasporic groups to maintain their heritage while integrating into host societies.

Despite extensive research on diaspora communities, much of the existing literature focuses on singular case studies, often overlooking the comparative dynamics across different geopolitical contexts (Vertovec, 1999; Faist, 2000; Brubaker, 2005). Furthermore, while digital engagement has been studied in various disciplines, the role of algorithmic curation in shaping diasporic narratives remains insufficiently explored (Noble, 2018; Gillespie, 2018). There is also limited work linking these online practices to the functioning of diasporic organizations, grassroots associations and policy think tanks, which are increasingly influenced by digital activism and cultural engagement (Bernal, 2014; Georgiou, 2020; Sahoo & Shome, 2021). This focus also aligns with emerging scholarship on the organizational dimension of digital diasporas. As Brinkerhoff (2009) and Georgiou (2020) observe, diasporic communities are increasingly mediated by digital structures that shape collective belonging and institutional engagement. Recent studies further emphasize how social media platforms extend beyond interpersonal connectivity to influence the strategies of diaspora organizations and policy think tanks (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018).

This study introduces the concept of digital diasporic engagement – a framework for understanding how online interactions sustain cultural continuity despite physical displacement. In this study, *digital diasporic engagement* is defined as the set of online practices through which diasporic communities use digital platforms to sustain cultural identity, mobilize collective action, maintain community solidarity and participate in transnational economic and organizational networks. The concept integrates four interconnected dimensions:

- (1) cultural preservation and identity expression;
- (2) political engagement and advocacy;
- (3) economic participation and digital entrepreneurship; and
- (4) community support and emotional solidarity.

Unlike broader notions of “digital diaspora,” which emphasize connectivity among dispersed populations, digital diasporic engagement focuses specifically on the forms of participation, interaction and mobilization that occur within digital platforms.

The conceptual framework of digital diasporic engagement is presented in Figure 1, showing how cultural identity, political activism, economic entrepreneurship and community solidarity are interconnected through digital platforms.

By examining four major diasporic groups, this research explores how digital platforms shape identity, foster collective memory and facilitate integration into host societies. These groups were selected on the basis of three criteria: population size, intensity of digital participation and geopolitical diversity, thereby ensuring comparative insights across contexts.

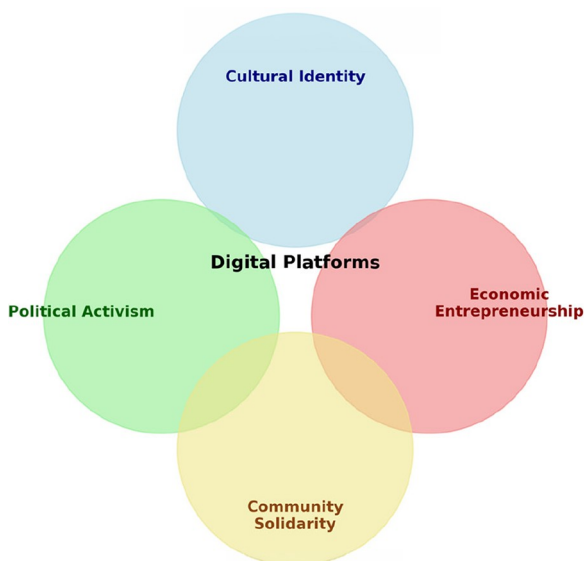


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of digital diasporic engagement

The inclusion of the Somali diaspora in the UK is analytically intentional despite its smaller population size relative to other cases. Shaped by histories of forced displacement and prolonged homeland instability, the Somali–UK diaspora offers a migration context distinct from predominantly economic migrant communities. Its inclusion strengthens the comparative framework by enabling analysis of how digital diasporic engagement operates under conditions of precarity and post-conflict mobility, thereby deepening the study’s analytical scope.

The study is further guided by the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1.* How do digital platforms facilitate cultural preservation and identity formation among diasporic communities?
- RQ2.* In what ways do online spaces foster political engagement, activism and collective voice across borders?
- RQ3.* How do digital platforms enable or constrain diasporic economic participation and organizational impact?
- RQ4.* What challenges of digital exclusion, misinformation and algorithmic bias shape diasporic interactions?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches diaspora studies by situating digital engagement within frameworks of identity, hybridity and transnational belonging. Practically, it offers insights for community organizations, grassroots networks and policymakers seeking to design inclusive and sustainable digital environments for diasporic populations. This research also provides an empirical basis for understanding the evolving role of digital engagement in diaspora communities and highlights the sociocultural implications of online participation. The theoretical framework for this study

integrates key perspectives from diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997), the digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015) and algorithmic curation (Gillespie, 2018). These perspectives provide a multi-layered approach to understanding how digital diasporas construct identity, engage in activism and navigate the complexities of platform algorithms that influence content visibility and representation. Through a qualitative thematic analysis of digital interactions, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on digital diaspora engagement by offering a comparative perspective on how different diasporic communities negotiate identity, connectivity and socio-political participation in the digital era.

Literature review

Diaspora and its evolution

The term “diaspora,” originating from the Greek word “diaspeirein,” meaning “to scatter,” has historically been associated with forced migrations, trade and colonization, resulting in the global dispersion of cultural practices, languages and identities (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991). Traditionally, diasporas have been framed by a deep-rooted connection to an idealized homeland and a collective consciousness bound by shared histories (Brah, 1996). However, globalization and advancements in digital technologies have transformed the concept of diaspora, moving beyond physical displacement toward transnational and virtual forms of belonging (Laguerre, 1998; Bernal, 2014). Recent studies argue that digital technologies reconfigure diasporic experiences by altering the way communities sustain identities, construct narratives and engage in socio-political activism (Georgiou, 2020).

The emergence of digital diasporas has challenged conventional notions of physical belonging, allowing dispersed individuals to maintain strong affective ties with their homeland while simultaneously integrating into host societies (Brinkerhoff, 2009). In Bernal’s Nation as Network, Bernal (2014) highlights how digitalization has facilitated the creation of transnational digital spaces, where diasporic communities sustain their cultural heritage, mobilize politically and develop hybrid identities. Digital diasporas, thus, represent an evolution of traditional diaspora studies, incorporating algorithmic curation of diasporic identities – where social media platforms structure how diasporic content is produced, circulated and consumed (Madianou & Miller, 2012; Noble, 2018).

Historically, diasporic identities have been maintained through oral traditions, religious practices and ethnic institutions (Cohen, 1997). The advent of digital technologies has transformed these interactions, providing new modes of communication that allow individuals to sustain cultural ties while integrating into host communities (Bernal, 2014).

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp have facilitated new forms of diasporic engagement, enabling real-time interaction and community-building. Studies show that online networks provide emotional support, reinforce cultural practices and serve as tools for political mobilization (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010; Diminescu, 2008). However, algorithm-driven content visibility can create echo chambers, shaping digital discourse in ways that may reinforce cultural stereotypes (Smicek, 2017). Many diasporic communities leverage social media for entrepreneurial activities, remittance coordination and policy advocacy. Platforms like WeChat, YouTube and TikTok serve as hubs for promoting businesses, while WhatsApp groups facilitate grassroots organizing and transnational communication (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Nonetheless, concerns about digital misinformation, privacy risks and access disparities highlight the complexities of online participation.

Theoretical perspectives

To understand digital diasporas, this study draws on multiple theoretical frameworks. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Abrams & Hogg, 2010) explains how individuals

derive a sense of belonging through group membership. Applied to diasporic communities, it clarifies how online spaces reinforce collective cultural identities while simultaneously negotiating hybrid forms of belonging in host societies. Social impact theory (Latané, 1981; Nowak, Szamrej, & Latané, 1990) further illuminates how the strength, immediacy and number of online interactions influence diasporic behaviors, particularly in mobilizing activism, collective action and community solidarity on digital platforms. These perspectives complement diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997) and the concept of the digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015), offering a layered understanding of identity, activism and digital influence. As summarized in Table 1, the theoretical frameworks provide complementary perspectives for analyzing how diasporic communities sustain identity, mobilize activism and navigate digital influence.

While much scholarship on digital diasporas highlights individual and community-level engagement, there is also a growing emphasis on the role of social media in shaping organizational practices. Leurs & Prabhakar (2018) demonstrate how digital platforms contribute to the institutionalization of diaspora networks, bridging individual cultural practices with organizational strategies. This complements Sahoo & Shome (2021) insights into South Asian youth organizations, underlining the importance of examining how diasporic associations and think tanks negotiate identity and activism in digital contexts.

In this study, these theoretical perspectives are used in a complementary manner to explain different dimensions of digital diasporic engagement. Diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997) provides the broader framework for understanding transnational identity and homeland attachment within dispersed communities. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) explains how digital spaces reinforce collective belonging and cultural identification among diaspora members. Social impact theory (Latané, 1981) helps interpret how the scale and immediacy of online interactions facilitate political mobilization and collective action. The concept of the digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015) frames social media platforms as arenas for transnational discourse and community participation, while algorithmic curation (Gillespie, 2018) explains how platform algorithms shape the visibility and circulation of diasporic narratives.

Digital diaspora and entrepreneurship

Diasporic entrepreneurship has evolved through social media marketplaces. Platforms such as WeChat, Instagram and TikTok enable migrant-owned businesses to reach transnational markets, while WhatsApp groups coordinate remittances and economic collaboration (Brinkerhoff, 2009; Patel, 2021). Yet, concerns about platform dependency, financial exclusion and regulation persist,

Table 1. Theoretical frameworks applied to digital diasporas

Theory	Key ideas	Application to digital diasporas
Diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997)	Connection to homeland, shared identity	Explains cultural continuity in online spaces
Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)	Belonging through group membership	Online communities reinforce diasporic identity
Social impact theory (Latané, 1981)	Influence shaped by immediacy, strength and number	Explains mobilization of activism on digital platforms
Digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015)	Platforms as sites of collective discourse	Highlights diasporas as affective publics in digital spaces

underlining the precarious nature of digital economic participation (Sassen, 2001; [Australian Business Review, 2022](#)).

Identified gaps

While existing literature provides valuable insights, three key gaps remain. First, most studies remain community-specific, lacking comparative scope across geopolitical contexts. Second, limited work integrates social identity and social impact theories with digital diaspora studies, leaving questions about how group identity and online influence shape community outcomes. Third, little attention has been given to the implications of algorithmic curation for diasporic organizations, grassroots activism and think tanks, despite their growing role in shaping policy and advocacy. This study addresses these gaps by offering a comparative analysis of four diverse diasporic communities through a framework of digital diasporic engagement.

Diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997) traditionally views diasporic identity as tied to an idealized homeland, but recent scholarship suggests that digital spaces create new, fluid diasporic identities (Brinkerhoff, 2009). The digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015) highlights how online platforms serve as new sites of belonging, activism and community discourse. Research on platform governance (Gillespie, 2018) and algorithmic biases (Noble, 2018) suggests that digital platforms shape the visibility of diasporic narratives. Algorithmic curation influences which stories are amplified, whose voices are heard and what forms of diasporic representation are prioritized. However, there is limited research on how different diasporic communities experience algorithmic visibility differently, which this study aims to address.

Diasporic entrepreneurship has evolved through social media marketplaces, with platforms like WeChat, Instagram and TikTok enabling migrant-owned businesses. However, challenges such as platform dependency, financial exclusion and digital regulation persist. This study examines how diasporic economic participation is shaped by digital platform policies and market accessibility.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study approach, which is widely recognized as appropriate for exploring complex sociocultural phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995). A case study design allows in-depth examination of diasporic digital practices across multiple cultural and geopolitical settings, facilitating comparative insights.

The research focuses on four diasporic groups: the Indian diaspora in the USA, the Somali diaspora in the UK, the Filipino diaspora in the Middle East and the Chinese diaspora in Australia. These groups were selected based on their geographic diversity, distinct sociocultural contexts and active engagement with social media for cultural preservation. The selected diasporic groups, their primary platforms and forms of engagement are outlined in [Table 2](#).

These case studies were selected primarily to capture variation in migration conditions across diasporic communities. Population size, digital engagement and geopolitical diversity were also used as supporting criteria to ensure that each case represented an active and visible digital diaspora suitable for comparative thematic analysis:

- Population size: Each diaspora represents a significant migrant community in its host country (Indian–USA: over 2.9 million, [Migration Policy Institute, 2023](#); Somali–UK: approximately 300,000, [Somali Diaspora Network, 2023](#); Filipino–Middle East: over 2.5 million, [Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023](#); Chinese–Australia: approximately 1.4 million, [Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023](#)).

Table 2. Diasporic groups, platforms and digital engagement

Diaspora group	Primary platforms	Approximate followers (2023–2024)	Nature of engagement
Indian–USA	Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok	100K–500K	Cultural festivals, language preservation, political activism, entrepreneurship and community events
Somali–UK	Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok	40K–500K	Oral traditions, political debates, religious networks, community gatherings and diaspora media production
Filipino–Middle East	Facebook, TikTok, YouTube	100K–1M	Support groups, cultural expression, labor rights activism, remittance coordination and migrant welfare
Chinese–Australia	WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Facebook	150K–500K	Lunar New Year celebrations, Mandarin lessons, traditional medicine exchange, business networking and advocacy

- Digital engagement: All four groups demonstrate high participation in online platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, WeChat, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), with active groups, influencers and community pages shaping diasporic narratives.
- Regional and socio-political diversity: These diasporas span four distinct geopolitical regions (North America, Europe, the Middle East and Australia), allowing for a comparative analysis of how digital engagement varies across different socio-political landscapes.

While population size provides contextual grounding, the comparative design of this study is analytically oriented, allowing examination of digital diasporic engagement across differing migration conditions and host-country constraints.

Data collection and ethics

Data were collected through *purposive sampling*, focusing on active digital spaces that met three inclusion criteria:

- (1) Follower count greater than 50,000.
- (2) Minimum activity of three posts per month.
- (3) Clear relevance to diasporic culture, politics or economy.

Private and closed WhatsApp groups were *excluded* to ensure transparency and ethical compliance. Only *publicly accessible pages, forums and open groups* were analyzed. The study followed ethical principles of netnography (Kozinets, 2019), using data available in the public domain. Since no private or individual-level data were accessed, separate IRB approval was not required.

Analysis procedures

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s six-step process (2006). Coding was conducted using NVivo software, and both authors independently coded the data set. An inter-coder

reliability score of 0.87 (Cohen’s kappa) was achieved, ensuring consistency. References to algorithmic curation in the analysis are based on observable patterns of content visibility, amplification and recurrence across platforms, rather than on direct technical analysis of platform algorithms. Themes were validated against the guiding theoretical frameworks: diaspora theory (Cohen, 1997), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social impact theory (Latané, 1981) and the digital public sphere (Papacharissi, 2015). The overall research design and analytical process is depicted in Figure 2.

Case studies

The Indian diaspora in the USA

As of 2023, over 2.9 million Indian immigrants reside in the USA, making them the second-largest foreign-born group in the country, accounting for 6% of the 47.8 million foreign-born residents (Migration Policy Institute, 2023). This community actively engages with digital platforms to maintain cultural practices, preserve linguistic heritage and participate in socio-political activities, both locally and transnationally (Pew Research Center, 2023). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp have become central to celebrating cultural festivals and preserving languages. Pages like “Diwali in the USA” on Facebook, with over 180,000 followers, and groups like “Holi Celebrations Abroad” on WhatsApp utilize these digital spaces to organize virtual events, share traditional recipes and livestream religious ceremonies (Smith, 2022). These online communities enable diaspora members to participate in cultural celebrations, fostering a sense of belonging despite geographical distances. For example, in 2022, over 75% of Indian-Americans participated in at least one online cultural event, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most commonly used platforms for such interactions. Instagram influencers and pages also play a key role in cultural preservation. One notable account is @indians_in_america, which has over 500,000 followers and regularly posts content related to Indian festivals, cuisine and lifestyle in the USA. The account serves as a hub for showcasing Indian traditions and experiences abroad, often reposting content from followers who share their celebrations. Organizations like the Telugu Association of North America (TANA), with over 100,000 followers on Facebook, and the Gujarati Samaj of Chicago (GSOC), which has nearly 50,000 members on Facebook, use Zoom and WhatsApp to host online language classes, poetry readings and regional film screenings (Sharma and Patel, 2021). These initiatives are vital for language retention among younger generations born in the USA, ensuring the continuity of linguistic heritage. A 2023 survey by the Language Preservation Institute indicated that 45% of younger Indian-Americans regularly attend virtual language classes, making them an integral part of their cultural education (Language Preservation Institute, 2023).

Digital platforms also play a crucial role in community building and political discourse. During the 2019 Indian general elections, WhatsApp and Twitter were instrumental in

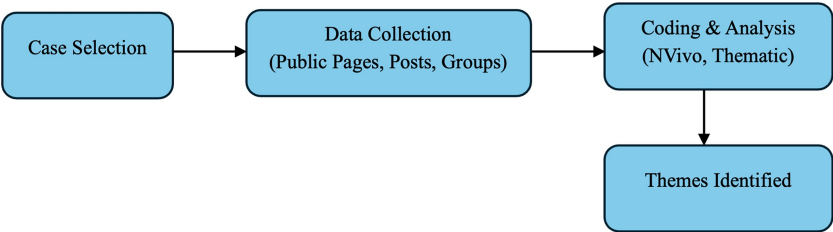


Figure 2. Research design flowchart

mobilizing diaspora participation (Mitra, 2021). Hashtags like #IndianElections and #NRIVotesMatter facilitated discussions and encouraged voting among non-resident Indians (NRIs). A 2021 study by the Center for Media Engagement highlighted that Indian Americans frequently use WhatsApp for political discussions, reflecting their active engagement in both the USA and Indian political landscapes (Center for Media Engagement, 2021). A Pew Research Center survey found that 60% of Indian-American respondents used digital platforms to discuss and influence political issues during the 2019 elections (Pew Research Center, 2021). The Farmers' Protest in India (2020–2021) garnered significant support from the Indian diaspora in the USA, with campaigns using hashtags like #StandWithFarmers on Twitter and advocacy videos on platforms such as TikTok amplifying the movement's reach (Patel, 2021). The diaspora's role in activism was underscored by the Global Diaspora Forum, which reported a 30% increase in online petitions related to the Farmers' Protest (Global Diaspora Forum, 2021). Economic ventures and contributions are also facilitated by digital platforms. Indian Americans, who account for about 1.5% of the US population, have a median household income significantly higher than the national median, showcasing their considerable economic impact (US Census Bureau, 2022). A report by the American Economic Review noted that Indian-Americans represent 28% of all foreign-born entrepreneurs in the USA, many of whom use digital platforms to expand their businesses globally (American Economic Review, 2022). For instance, @indiabusinesshub, an Instagram account with over 150,000 followers, regularly features Indian-American entrepreneurs and their businesses, fostering connections and promoting entrepreneurship within the diaspora.

Media consumption habits of Asian Indian immigrants further reinforce ethnic identity and maintain cultural ties. A 2023 study revealed a preference for Indian-origin television programming, accessible through satellite and digital platforms (SJMARs, 2023). Over 52% of Indian-Americans reported using streaming services like Netflix and YouTube to watch Indian-origin content (Digital Media Institute, 2023). This engagement with media helps reinforce cultural identity, with 68% of Indian-American youth engaging with Indian media online to explore their cultural roots (Center for Digital Identity, 2023). Young Indian Americans utilize the internet to discuss and navigate their evolving cultural identities, illustrating how digital platforms are key in exploring and expressing heritage (Edspace.American.edu, 2023). A 2022 report by the Youth and Media Institute showed that nearly 60% of second-generation Indian-Americans use digital spaces to connect with their cultural heritage and discuss their identities (International Organization for Migration, 2023).

In conclusion, the Indian diaspora in the USA effectively uses digital platforms for cultural preservation, community engagement, political discourse and economic ventures. The increasing digital involvement serves not only as a medium for connection but also as a space for identity negotiation, activism and entrepreneurship. These online communities, such as those on Facebook and Instagram, with millions of followers, play an essential role in shaping the diaspora's experiences, especially for younger generations navigating the complexities of cultural identity and belonging (Mitra, 2021; SJMARs, 2023). The growing role of digital platforms in the Indian-American diaspora continues to impact cultural and social dynamics in the transnational space.

The Somali diaspora in the UK

The Somali diaspora in the UK, which includes over 300,000 individuals, is highly engaged with digital platforms to maintain cultural identity, foster community solidarity and engage with political and religious narratives. The integration of digital technologies, such as social media, mobile applications and digital video, has allowed the Somali community to create

new avenues for social interaction and cultural preservation, especially as many members of the diaspora navigate the complexities of displacement and resettlement. As of 2023, there is a growing recognition of the digital transformation among Somali communities, with 85% of Somali households in the UK reporting regular use of digital platforms to connect with their heritage and the broader global Somali community ([International Organization for Migration, 2023](#)). Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have become essential tools for connecting diaspora members with their cultural, religious and political narratives. This engagement has allowed for new forms of expression, unity and advocacy.

One of the most significant aspects of digital engagement within the Somali diaspora is the way social media influencers, such as Halima Aden, have used platforms like Instagram and Twitter to celebrate Somali culture and identity. Aden, who has over 1.5 million followers on Instagram, has actively utilized the platform to promote Somali fashion, traditional values and her experiences as a Muslim model. This has contributed to a renewed sense of pride and identity among Somali youth, especially in diaspora communities ([Aden, 2023](#)). Furthermore, Somali-run YouTube channels like Somali Voices and Somali Heritage TV provide cultural content that connects younger generations with their heritage. Somali Voices, a channel dedicated to showcasing traditional Somali storytelling, poetry, and history, has accumulated over 200,000 subscribers globally. Studies have shown that 68% of Somali youth in the UK use YouTube to engage with Somali cultural content, reinforcing the growing role of digital video in the preservation of cultural practices ([International Organization for Migration, 2023](#)). Facebook remains a primary platform for organizing and sharing cultural, political and community events. Pages such as Somali Excellence have become key venues for Somali diaspora members to celebrate cultural achievements and discuss important socio-political matters. Somali Excellence has over 500,000 members globally, and it plays a central role in the diaspora's online community-building efforts ([Somali Diaspora Network, 2022](#)). Similarly, Facebook groups like Somali History and Politics attract more than 40,000 members engaged in discussions about Somalia's political developments, further facilitating connections to the homeland's historical narrative. On TikTok, Somali influencers have found new opportunities to express cultural pride in creative formats. Somali content creators, such as @SomaliQueen (over 500 K followers) and @SomaliGems (300K followers), have utilized TikTok to highlight Somali beauty, food and heritage, reaching a global audience. TikTok, with its unique video format and algorithm, has become an essential platform for young Somalis to create and share content related to their identity. According to a report, 45% of Somali youth in the UK use TikTok to express their cultural identity, creating a dynamic space for cultural exchange ([International Organization for Migration, 2023](#)).

A newer trend within the Somali diaspora's digital engagement is the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies to create immersive experiences of Somali culture. VR platforms like SomaliVR allow users to experience traditional Somali festivals, visit cultural landmarks in Somalia and explore historical sites virtually. In 2022, over 15,000 users from the Somali diaspora in the UK accessed VR platforms for cultural purposes, highlighting a shift toward more interactive digital experiences ([Somali Digital Innovations Report, 2023](#)). These virtual experiences enable members of the diaspora to "visit" Somalia in ways that were not possible before, creating new layers of cultural connection for younger generations growing up outside their ancestral homeland. Facebook continues to serve as a vital platform for discussing Somali history and politics. Groups like Somali History and Politics facilitate active discourse among diaspora members about the country's historical events, such as the Somali Civil War, and current political developments. As of 2023, this group has over 40,000 active members globally, providing an important space for the

exchange of political and historical knowledge ([Somali Diaspora Network, 2022](#)). Additionally, Facebook groups dedicated to religious and spiritual content have witnessed rapid growth. Many such groups focus on sharing Islamic teachings, Quranic lessons and Somali-language religious content, facilitating both spiritual engagement and linguistic preservation within the diaspora. Religious engagement on platforms like WhatsApp has grown significantly, with 75% of Somali Muslims in the UK reporting that they participate in Quranic study circles or live-streamed prayers organized via WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp has proven indispensable for maintaining religious practices, particularly among younger generations who may not have direct access to local mosques ([Somali Religious Engagement Study, 2022](#)).

The Somali diaspora has also embraced the digital economy, with many entrepreneurs using social media to promote businesses and create economic opportunities. According to the [Somali Entrepreneur Network \(2021\)](#), over 35% of Somali entrepreneurs in the UK have built their businesses on Instagram and Facebook, leveraging these platforms for marketing, product sales and customer engagement. Somali-owned businesses in areas such as food, fashion and technology have become increasingly visible, contributing to the UK's digital economy. In 2022, the Somali Digital Business Survey found that Somali-run businesses had a 25% higher online sales growth than the national average, underscoring the significance of digital entrepreneurship within the community. This digital economy not only boosts local economies but also creates job opportunities for young Somali immigrants, helping to bridge the gap between the Somali diaspora and the wider UK economy ([Somali Digital Business Survey, 2022](#)).

Another emerging digital concept within the Somali diaspora is the hybridized digital identity created through the intersection of cultural heritage and modern technology. Somali youth, especially second-generation immigrants, use platforms like Instagram and TikTok to blend cultural pride with contemporary trends. This form of digital hybridity allows individuals to express both their Somali roots and their identities as global citizens. Research indicates that 45% of Somali youth in the UK use TikTok to share content related to Somali culture, fashion and activism, demonstrating how these platforms offer creative outlets for self-expression ([Somali Digital Identity Study, 2023](#)). Additionally, gaming has emerged as a significant component of digital engagement among Somali youth. Platforms like Twitch and Discord allow Somali gamers to connect with others worldwide, while also providing a space to discuss issues related to identity, migration and culture. The global rise of eSports has provided an avenue for Somali youth to form communities centered around gaming, further shaping their digital identities in the 21st century ([Somali Gaming Culture Report, 2023](#)).

In conclusion, the Somali diaspora in the UK has effectively leveraged a wide range of digital platforms and technologies to preserve cultural practices, engage in political discourse, promote entrepreneurship, and connect with religious and historical narratives. From social media to VR and AR technologies, digital tools are reshaping the Somali diaspora's engagement with their cultural and national identity, offering new opportunities for cultural preservation, community-building and political advocacy in the digital age.

The Filipino diaspora in the Middle East

Filipino migrant workers in the Middle East, numbering over 2.5 million ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023](#)), often experience isolation and restricted social mobility. In response, they turn to social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok and YouTube, which serve as essential lifelines for emotional support and the preservation of cultural identity. These digital spaces facilitate the maintenance of familial ties and enable cultural expression,

helping Filipino workers in the region stay connected to their roots despite the geographical distance.

Facebook groups such as “Pinoy OFW Support,” which has over 100,000 members, offer advice, emotional support and a sense of community among migrant workers. These online communities allow members to share experiences, navigate challenges and provide mutual encouragement. TikTok, with its rapidly growing user base, serves as a platform where Filipino workers share daily life experiences through vlogs. For example, content creators often post traditional cooking tutorials, such as adobo and sinigang recipes, or showcase karaoke sessions, which hold cultural significance in Filipino society. One popular TikTok account, @PinoyKultura, with over 1 million followers, blends personal storytelling with cultural representations, such as family gatherings, traditional Filipino music and language, to create a shared sense of belonging.

Social media also plays a vital role in organizing and participating in cultural and religious events. The celebration of “Simbang Gabi,” a traditional Filipino Christmas Mass, is a notable example. Filipino migrants in the Middle East use Facebook pages like “Simbang Gabi Dubai” (with over 50,000 followers) to coordinate and promote the event, ensuring that they can observe the Christmas tradition even while living in restrictive environments. These gatherings, which are often livestreamed, enable Filipinos to participate in religious rituals and community bonding, preserving their cultural and spiritual identity. Furthermore, Instagram accounts like @PinoyAbroadLife, which has over 200,000 followers, regularly feature cultural events and public gatherings, allowing migrants to stay connected to these meaningful celebrations, regardless of the limitations posed by their host country. Digital platforms also provide a space for other forms of expression, such as Filipino music and dance. YouTube channels like “OFW Music & Dance” with 300,000 subscribers showcase Filipino talent, from traditional dances like tinikling to popular modern songs. These channels act as repositories for Filipino cultural content, offering a platform for migrant workers to celebrate and share their cultural expressions.

In summary, social media serves as a powerful tool for the Filipino diaspora in the Middle East, offering vital emotional support, maintaining family connections and enabling the preservation of cultural and religious practices. Through Facebook groups, TikTok vlogs and YouTube channels, Filipino migrant workers are able to sustain their cultural identity, engage in community activities and stay connected to both their homeland and their fellow overseas workers. The rise of these platforms has created a virtual space where the Filipino diaspora can thrive and support one another, even in the face of adversity and isolation.

It is important to note that forms of advocacy and rights-oriented discourse within these digital spaces often operate through transnational networks rather than direct political mobilization within host countries. Much of such content is produced or amplified by Filipino influencers, community organizations or media actors based outside restrictive host-country jurisdictions. For migrant workers residing in the Middle East, digital engagement more commonly takes the form of sharing, consumption and community discussion, reflecting the constraints imposed by surveillance, legal regulation and employment precarity.

In this study, the Middle East is treated as a regional analytical category reflecting the transnational digital networks of Filipino migrant workers rather than as a homogeneous political unit. The analysis primarily draws on publicly accessible social media pages and influencer accounts that operate across national boundaries or are administered transnationally, often from outside host countries. This approach allows examination of shared patterns of digital engagement among Filipino migrants while acknowledging variation in host-country political and regulatory environments.

The Chinese diaspora in Australia

As of 2023, over 1.4 million people of Chinese ancestry reside in Australia, making them one of the largest migrant groups in the country and accounting for approximately 5.5% of the total population ([Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023](#)). This community actively engages with digital platforms to maintain cultural heritage, preserve linguistic identity and participate in socio-political activities both in Australia and transnationally ([Pew Research Center, 2023](#)). Social media platforms such as WeChat, Facebook and Xiaohongshu (Little Red Book) play a central role in cultural exchange and community building. Groups like “Chinese in Australia” on WeChat, which has over 200,000 members, and Facebook pages such as “Sydney Chinese Community” with more than 150,000 followers, serve as hubs for organizing cultural festivals, sharing traditional recipes and discussing diaspora-related issues ([Liu, 2022](#)). Online communities enable members of the Chinese diaspora to stay connected with their heritage despite geographical distances. In 2022, over 70% of Chinese-Australians participated in at least one online cultural event, with WeChat and Xiaohongshu being the most commonly used platforms for such interactions. Popular influencers and community pages also contribute to cultural preservation. One notable Xiaohongshu account, @aussie_chinese_life, which has over 500,000 followers, frequently posts content related to Lunar New Year celebrations, traditional Chinese medicine practices and life as a Chinese immigrant in Australia ([Wang, 2023](#)).

Organizations such as the Australia China Friendship Society (ACFS) and the Chinese Australian Historical Society use digital platforms to host online Mandarin and Cantonese language classes, traditional storytelling sessions and virtual museum exhibitions ([Chen & Wong, 2021](#)). These initiatives are crucial for language retention among younger generations. A 2023 survey by the Language and Identity Research Institute found that 50% of second-generation Chinese-Australians regularly engage in digital language learning programs, emphasizing the role of technology in maintaining linguistic heritage ([Language and Identity Research Institute, 2023](#)). Digital platforms also facilitate political discourse and activism within the Chinese diaspora. During the 2019–2020 Hong Kong protests, WeChat and Twitter became crucial in mobilizing community discussions and organizing demonstrations in Australian cities ([Ming, 2021](#)). Hashtags like #StandWithHongKong and #ChineseDiasporaSolidarity trended on Twitter, reflecting the diaspora’s engagement with global political issues. A 2021 study by the Center for Media and Migration found that 65% of Chinese-Australians use WeChat as their primary source of political news, often engaging in debates about Australian-Chinese relations and transnational concerns ([Center for Media and Migration, 2021](#)). Similarly, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media played an essential role in combating misinformation and addressing racism against Chinese-Australians, with platforms like Facebook and WeChat hosting online forums and support groups ([Zhou, 2021](#)).

Economic contributions from the Chinese diaspora are also bolstered by digital connectivity. Chinese-Australians, who constitute a significant portion of the country’s business community, actively leverage platforms like Taobao, Alibaba and Instagram for cross-border e-commerce ([Australian Trade and Investment Commission, 2022](#)). The WeChat Mini Program @ChineseEntrepreneursAustralia, with over 100,000 users, provides networking opportunities and business advice tailored to diaspora entrepreneurs ([Deng, 2022](#)). According to a 2022 report by the Australian Business Review, Chinese-Australians represent 25% of foreign-born entrepreneurs in Australia, many of whom use digital platforms to expand their businesses and maintain economic ties with China ([Australian Business Review, 2022](#)). Media consumption patterns among Chinese-Australians further reinforce cultural identity and transnational connections. A 2023 study found that 60% of the

Chinese diaspora in Australia regularly watch Chinese-language television programs and films via streaming services such as iQIYI, Tencent Video and YouTube (Digital Media Institute, 2023). Over 55% of Chinese-Australian youth reported using Xiaohongshu and Bilibili to engage with Chinese pop culture, showcasing the role of digital platforms in shaping diasporic identity (Center for Digital Identity, 2023). Additionally, Chinese-language radio stations and online forums like “Australian Chinese Forum” remain popular avenues for discussing cultural and political issues relevant to the diaspora (Zhang et al., 2023).

In conclusion, the Chinese diaspora in Australia effectively utilizes digital platforms for cultural preservation, community engagement, political discourse and economic ventures. These online spaces, particularly WeChat, Xiaohongshu and Facebook, serve as crucial tools for fostering connections, preserving linguistic heritage and engaging in transnational discussions. The increasing digital involvement among Chinese-Australians reflects a broader trend in which technology facilitates cultural continuity, activism and entrepreneurship, reinforcing the diaspora’s unique identity within the Australian multicultural landscape (Ming, 2021; Australian Business Review, 2022).

Thematic analysis

This study explores the role of digital platforms in shaping cultural identity, political activism and economic participation among four diaspora communities: Indian-Americans, Somali-Britons, Filipino migrant workers in the Middle East and Chinese-Australians. Using a qualitative thematic analysis, we examine how these communities utilize social media to negotiate dual identities and maintain cultural continuity. Given the rapid digital transformation in recent years, our study spans January 2024 to December 2024, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of contemporary trends and digital behaviors. The choice of this timeframe ensures that the study captures significant cultural celebrations, political movements and economic trends that shape digital engagement among diaspora communities. A full year provides an extensive data set that allows for the identification of seasonal trends, recurring patterns and contextual variations that would otherwise be missed in a shorter study. While the thematic analysis focuses exclusively on social media interactions collected between January and December 2024, references from earlier years are included only as contextual sources describing diaspora demographics, platform usage trends or prior research findings. These sources provide background information but are not part of the data set analyzed in this study.

The research draws on data from top 6 global platforms in 2024 (Statista, 2025), which includes Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok and WeChat. These platforms were selected based on their extensive user engagement and their role in facilitating diaspora interactions. Data collection was conducted using a purposive sampling method, targeting public pages, influential social media groups and key digital influencers. Accounts and pages were included in the analysis if they had over 50,000 followers and consistently posted diaspora-related content at least three times per month. Groups that were inactive for a period of three months or private pages requiring invitations were excluded to maintain transparency and accessibility in the data set. The thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke’s six-step approach, ensuring a structured coding process. Initially, the research team familiarized themselves with the data set by reviewing posts, captions, hashtags and user engagement metrics. Open coding was conducted using NVivo software, enabling the identification of dominant themes and sub-themes. Through an iterative process, codes were categorized into broader themes related to identity, activism, entrepreneurship and community-building. To ensure reliability, both author analyzed the data independently, achieving an inter-coder reliability score of 0.87 using Cohen’s kappa, signifying strong agreement in theme identification. The results were further refined through

regular reviews, ensuring that identified themes were not only statistically significant but also conceptually relevant to the broader discourse on digital diaspora engagement.

Findings

The findings reveal both shared patterns of digital engagement across the four cases and context-specific variations shaped by migration history, vulnerability and socio-political conditions. Thematic analysis of the four diasporic groups (Indian–USA, Somali–UK, Filipino–Middle East, Chinese–Australia) yielded *four major themes*, each with sub-themes that address the research questions. These themes and their corresponding sub-themes are summarized in [Table 3](#).

Theme 1: Cultural preservation and identity formation

Digital platforms play an essential role in preserving the cultural identity of diaspora communities through what is now referred to as platformed diaspora engagement and algorithmic cultural curation. Indian-American groups actively use social media to reinforce traditions, as seen in Facebook pages like “Diwali in the USA,” which has over 180,000 followers. This page allows members to share their festival experiences, post videos of cultural performances and engage in discussions about the historical and spiritual significance of Diwali. Indian-Americans also rely on digital storytelling through YouTube channels such as “DesiLifeUSA” (300,000 subscribers), which documents the experiences of second-generation immigrants as they balance Indian traditions with Western lifestyles. The Somali-British community utilizes Facebook pages such as “Somali Culture and Heritage” (120,000 members) to document oral histories, traditional music and poetry readings, demonstrating networked transnationalism. The platform facilitates intergenerational knowledge-sharing, with elders posting videos narrating stories from pre-civil war Somalia, helping younger Somali-Britons connect with their ancestry. Additionally, the Somali diaspora frequently engages with TikTok creators like @SomaliVoices (250,000 followers), where cultural discourse takes place in a visually engaging format, making heritage more accessible to younger audiences. Filipino migrants in the Middle East leverage TikTok accounts like @PinoyHeritage (200,000 followers) to share traditional Filipino recipes, dances and Tagalog language lessons, reinforcing national identity among overseas workers. Facebook groups such as “Buhay OFW” (350,000 members) serve as digital support networks where Filipino migrants exchange cultural knowledge while navigating life abroad. Likewise, Chinese-Australians engage with Xiaohongshu and WeChat groups such as “Chinese in Australia” (200,000 members) to celebrate cultural events like Lunar New Year, share regional dialect tutorials and discuss traditional medicine practices. The popularity of Xiaohongshu stems from its ability to curate algorithmically tailored content that aligns with diasporic identity needs, ensuring that younger generations remain culturally

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes of digital diaspora engagement

Theme	Sub-themes
Cultural identity and preservation	Language retention; heritage festivals; transnational cultural production
Political activism and advocacy	Grassroots activism; online campaigns; diaspora lobbying
Economic participation and entrepreneurs	Digital entrepreneurship; remittances; professional networks
Community solidarity and support	Migrant support groups; mental health forums; crisis response coordination

engaged despite geographic separation. These examples highlight how diaspora groups use digital hybridity to negotiate identity in both host and home countries.

Theme 2: Political engagement and activism

Digital activism, often termed algorithmic activism, is a crucial element in diaspora identity negotiation. Indian-Americans have mobilized significant political engagement through WhatsApp and Twitter, particularly in response to homeland politics, as evidenced by the #StandWithFarmers movement. This hashtag trended for weeks, garnering millions of engagements from NRIs supporting farmers' protests in India. Activists use Twitter Spaces to organize real-time discussions, making digital activism more interactive and participatory. Similarly, Somali-Britons have used Facebook groups like "Somali History and Politics," which has 40,000 members, to engage in discussions about political developments in Somalia. During the 2024 Somali elections, these groups saw a 60% increase in engagement, demonstrating the role of social media in shaping diasporic political consciousness. Filipino workers in the Middle East frequently use Facebook pages such as "OFWs for Change" (180,000 members) to advocate for labor rights, fair wages and policies protecting overseas workers. Filipino TikTok influencers like @OFWActivist (300,000 followers) leverage short-form videos to discuss legal rights, providing an easily accessible medium for activism. Meanwhile, Chinese-Australians engage in political discussions via WeChat public forums such as "Chinese Voices Australia" (90,000 members), where they debate policies affecting immigration, citizenship rights and China-Australia relations. These platforms embody networked activism, allowing diaspora members to transcend geographical boundaries and participate in homeland politics in real time.

Theme 3: Economic integration and digital entrepreneurship

Digital platforms offer economic sustainability avenues for diaspora entrepreneurs. Chinese-Australians have leveraged WeChat Mini Programs, such as @ChineseEntrepreneursAustralia (100,000 users), to facilitate business networking and growth. This program was chosen for analysis due to its strong role in connecting business owners within the diaspora, enabling cross-border trade and investment. Filipino migrant workers in the Middle East actively use Instagram and TikTok to promote entrepreneurial ventures, with micro-businesses flourishing through influencer collaborations. Accounts like @PinoyMarketDubai (250,000 followers) provide a marketplace for overseas workers to advertise products, secure clients and navigate business regulations in foreign economies. The selection of this platform is based on its efficiency in supporting low-income diaspora entrepreneurs who may not have access to traditional business networking channels.

Theme 4: Community solidarity and mental well-being

The digital sphere serves as a crucial space for fostering community resilience and emotional support. Filipino migrant workers, often isolated due to restrictive labor conditions, rely on Facebook groups like "Pinoy OFW Support" (100,000 members) to share experiences, seek assistance and provide encouragement. The group was analyzed because of its significant role in reducing psychological distress among overseas workers. TikTok influencers such as @PinoyKultura, who has over 1 million followers, reinforce cultural pride and provide content that validates migrant experiences. The reason for selecting this account lies in its use of digital storytelling, humor and cultural nostalgia to foster psychological well-being among a vulnerable population. Similarly, Somali-British communities use WhatsApp groups dedicated to Quranic study and spiritual guidance, ensuring that younger generations maintain a connection to their faith despite the challenges of diaspora life. These platforms

were chosen for analysis due to their ability to strengthen communal bonds while providing crucial mental health support.

Overall, the comparative analysis across the four diasporic groups reveals that while each community emphasizes certain dimensions of digital engagement more strongly – such as cultural preservation among the Indian–US diaspora, political activism within Somali–UK networks, economic entrepreneurship among Chinese–Australians and community solidarity in Filipino–Middle East groups – common patterns of cultural continuity and transnational connection remain visible across all cases. These similarities and differences are presented visually in [Figure 3](#), which provides a comparative overview of diaspora engagement across the four identified themes.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that digital platforms are not merely tools for communication but act as critical spaces for cultural reconstruction, identity negotiation and transnational activism within diaspora communities. By examining the Indian diaspora in the USA, the Somali diaspora in the UK, the Filipino diaspora in the Middle East and the Chinese diaspora in Australia, this study addresses a significant gap in comparative digital diaspora research.

Digital platforms as sites of cultural continuity and hybridity

Social media fosters cultural preservation by enabling diasporic communities to maintain traditions, linguistic heritage and religious practices despite geographical displacement. For instance, platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp and WeChat facilitate virtual participation in cultural festivals, while TikTok and Instagram provide visual storytelling spaces for showcasing hybrid identities. Social media facilitates cultural preservation through online festivals, language programs and intergenerational exchanges, consistent with [Brinkerhoff's \(2009\)](#) concept of digital diasporas. These findings support social identity theory ([Tajfel & Turner, 1986](#)), as diasporic members reinforce belonging through collective participation in culturally marked online spaces. Yet, algorithmic curation often amplifies nostalgic or homogenized content, creating tensions between cultural preservation and hybrid adaptation ([Noble, 2018](#)).

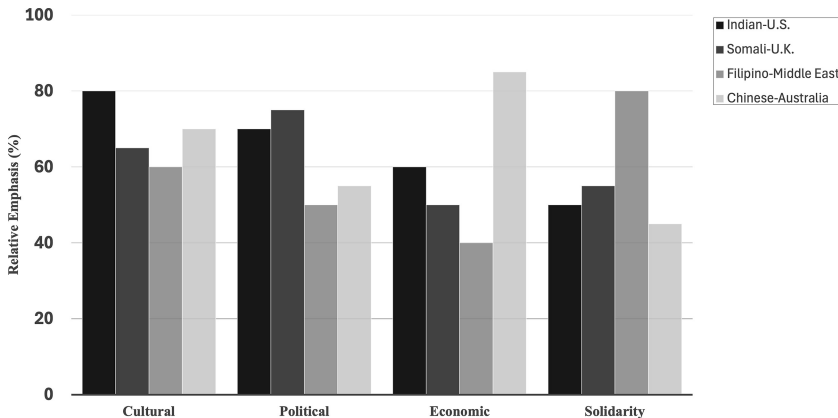


Figure 3. Comparative diaspora engagement across themes

Transnational activism and digital mobilization

Digital activism – whether through hashtags like #StandWithFarmers or Somali Facebook political debates – illustrates how diasporas exert influence in both home and host-country politics. This confirms [Marlowe’s \(2018\)](#) view of social media as a site of political subversion while extending it through comparative analysis. Social impact theory ([Latané, 1981](#)) helps explain how immediacy and volume of digital interactions increase diasporic mobilization. However, findings also highlight limitations, as algorithmic biases and platform governance often privilege dominant voices while marginalizing minority narratives ([Gillespie, 2018](#)). This dual role of digital platforms – as enablers and gatekeepers – is summarized in [Figure 4](#).

This study advances the concept of digital diasporic engagement by demonstrating that similar platform practices – cultural expression, activism and community-building – operate differently depending on migration condition and structural constraint. The comparative design reveals patterns of visibility, agency and vulnerability that would remain obscured in single-case analyses, particularly in relation to precarity and platform governance.

Economic integration and digital entrepreneurship

Diasporic entrepreneurs across WeChat, Instagram and TikTok demonstrate the role of digital platforms as economic incubators. This aligns with [Brinkerhoff’s \(2009\)](#) emphasis on digital diasporas as transnational economic actors, while also extending scholarship by showing how platform dependency and regulation make such ventures precarious. The findings underscore the need for policies that support sustainable diasporic entrepreneurship.

Algorithmic influence and generational digital divides

A key challenge identified in this study is the generational divide in digital engagement. While younger diaspora members utilize digital spaces for identity exploration and activism, older generations engage with social media as a means of cultural reinforcement. Additionally, the algorithmic governance of diasporic content shapes what individuals consume, often leading to polarized representations of homeland issues. The study underscores the need for critical digital literacy initiatives to mitigate misinformation, counter algorithmic biases and promote more inclusive digital storytelling.

While social media enables diasporic mobilization, it also risks reinforcing ideological silos through algorithmic content curation ([Gillespie, 2018](#)). The study highlights the need for

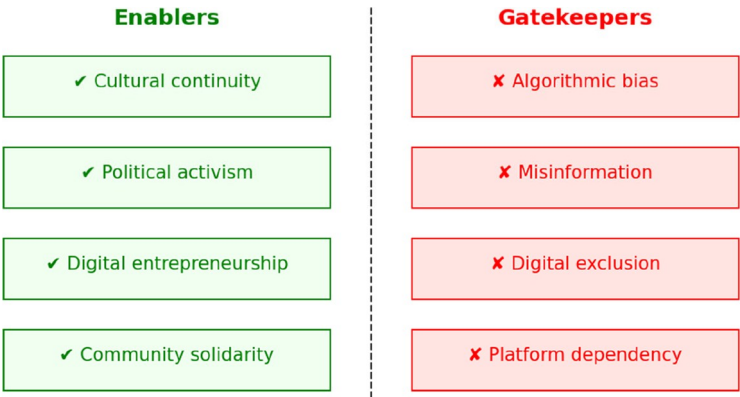


Figure 4. Dual role of digital platforms for diasporas

platform accountability in representing diverse diasporic voices, particularly in addressing algorithmic suppression of minority narratives. Furthermore, while digital activism is powerful, its effectiveness is often limited by performative engagement rather than sustained policy change (Milan, 2015).

The comparative analysis also reveals that digital diasporic engagement is shaped by the structural conditions under which different migrant communities operate. Diasporas located in relatively stable migration contexts, such as Indian professionals in the USA or Chinese migrants in Australia, often utilize digital platforms for cultural expression, entrepreneurial networking and transnational political discourse. By contrast, migrants situated in more precarious labor or displacement contexts – including Filipino migrant workers in the Middle East and segments of the Somali diaspora shaped by conflict-driven migration – engage digital platforms under greater regulatory and socio-economic constraints. Legal status, labor regimes, host-country regulations and forms of platform governance influence how openly diaspora members can participate in digital discourse. In such contexts, digital engagement often prioritizes community solidarity, emotional support and transnational communication rather than direct political mobilization within host-country environments.

Contribution and gaps addressed

This study makes several important contributions to the scholarship on digital diasporas and transnational studies.

First, it offers a comparative framework across four diasporic groups – Indian–USA, Somali–UK, Filipino–Middle East and Chinese–Australia – spanning distinct geopolitical contexts. While much of the existing literature has concentrated on single diaspora communities, this study highlights both convergences (such as cultural preservation and digital activism) and divergences (such as religious solidarity in Somali networks versus entrepreneurial focus in Chinese–Australian spaces). This comparative approach fills a significant gap in diaspora research, where cross-case analyses remain limited.

Second, the study enriches theory by integrating social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and social impact theory (Latané, 1981) into the analysis of digital diasporas. Social identity theory clarifies how diasporic members reinforce collective belonging through online cultural practices, while social impact theory explains how immediacy, strength and the number of digital interactions amplify activism and community solidarity. This theoretical integration provides a more nuanced understanding of how diasporic communities not only sustain identity but also mobilize transnational influence in digital spaces.

Third, the research emphasizes the applied significance of digital diasporas for grassroots organizations, cultural associations and policy think tanks. Cultural groups use Facebook and WhatsApp to sustain linguistic and cultural practices, while migrant labor associations, particularly among Filipinos in the Middle East, leverage digital platforms for advocacy and rights-based mobilization. By linking these practices to broader organizational and institutional contexts, the study responds to calls for research that demonstrates tangible policy and social impact.

Fourth, the study advances an underexplored dimension of diaspora studies: the role of algorithmic mediation in shaping diasporic visibility and representation. Findings show that curated content on platforms such as TikTok, Xiaohongshu and WeChat can foster cultural pride and nostalgia but also create echo chambers that reinforce stereotypes or silence minority voices. By foregrounding these tensions, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature on platform governance and algorithmic bias. Accordingly, algorithmic curation is approached in this study as a structural condition shaping diasporic visibility and engagement, rather than as a variable empirically measured through platform-level data.

Finally, the research identifies clear pathways for policy and future scholarship. It demonstrates that digital platforms serve a dual role – as enablers of diasporic identity, solidarity and entrepreneurship but also as gatekeepers that constrain representation and participation. This calls for greater investment in digital literacy programs, algorithmic transparency measures and policy frameworks that support sustainable diasporic entrepreneurship and inclusion. Future research should explore the implications of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and VR for diasporic engagement, building on the foundation provided by this study. [Table 4](#) outlines the major gaps in the literature and demonstrates how this study responds to them.

Conclusion and future directions

This study examined how digital platforms enable diasporic communities to sustain cultural identity, engage in political activism, participate in economic ventures and foster emotional solidarity across transnational boundaries. By focusing on four diasporic groups – the Indian diaspora in the USA, the Somali diaspora in the UK, the Filipino diaspora in the Middle East and the Chinese diaspora in Australia – the research provided a comparative framework that reveals both commonalities and distinct contextual dynamics in digital engagement. By comparing diasporic communities situated in both stable and precarious migration contexts, the study demonstrates that digital diasporic engagement is shaped not only by cultural identity but also by migration condition and structural constraint. This comparative approach enables the study to move beyond descriptive accounts of digital practices and to identify how migration precarity and platform governance systematically shape diasporic visibility and agency.

The analysis identified four major themes: cultural preservation and identity formation, political engagement and activism, economic integration and entrepreneurship and community solidarity and mental well-being. Together, these findings demonstrate that diasporic digital engagement is not a uniform process but a negotiated practice shaped by cultural traditions, generational divides, algorithmic mediation and the socio-political realities of host countries. Beyond these empirical insights, the study underscores the dual role of digital platforms: they serve as enablers of transnational connectivity and empowerment while simultaneously reproducing inequalities through algorithmic bias, digital exclusion and platform dependency.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for:

- inclusive digital literacy programs that address generational divides and empower migrant workers, youth, and grassroots organizations;
- algorithmic transparency and accountability measures to ensure fair representation of diverse diasporic voices; and
- support for digital entrepreneurship through policies that reduce regulatory barriers and enhance financial inclusion for migrant-owned businesses.

Table 4. Contributions of this study

Gap in literature	How this study responds
Focus on single diaspora cases	Provides a comparative framework across four groups
Limited theoretical diversity	Integrates social identity and social impact theory
Weak link to organizations/policy	Connects findings to grassroots and think tanks
Overlooked algorithmic mediation	Highlights curation and visibility challenges

Future research should build on this comparative foundation by examining the long-term impact of digital engagement on identity and belonging, as well as the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and VR in shaping diasporic futures.

Beyond individual and community engagement, the findings also carry important implications for diaspora organizations, migrant support groups and transnational advocacy networks. Digital platforms increasingly function as organizational infrastructures through which diaspora associations coordinate activities, mobilize resources and maintain connections across national boundaries. Grassroots organizations, policy think tanks and community groups rely on these digital spaces to disseminate information, organize events and advocate for migrant rights. Understanding digital diasporic engagement therefore offers valuable insights into how transnational organizational networks operate in digitally mediated environments and how diaspora organizations adapt their communication and mobilization strategies within global digital ecosystems.

In conclusion, digital diasporas function as hybrid socio-cultural ecosystems where identity, activism and economic agency are dynamically negotiated. Recognizing both the opportunities and challenges of these digital spaces is essential for scholars, practitioners and policy-makers seeking to foster inclusive and sustainable forms of diasporic belonging in the globalized era.

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