



## Digital Communication Ethics in the Age of TikTok: Technology, Moral Culture, and Indigenous Values in Mauritania

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### ABSTRACT

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In the age of digital communication, platforms like TikTok have become powerful tools for self-expression, cultural exchange, and social mobilization. However, their influence on traditional moral frameworks and cultural values, particularly in indigenous communities, raises significant ethical questions. This reflection examines the impact of digital communication, specifically TikTok, on the indigenous moral culture in Mauritania. With a focus on the interplay between modernity and traditional values, this study explores how TikTok facilitates both the preservation and potential erosion of indigenous cultures in Mauritania, a country with deep-rooted traditions and a strong sense of community. By analyzing the ethical implications of digital content consumption and production, the paper highlights the challenges and opportunities that arise when indigenous moral cultures are exposed to globalized, fast-paced digital media. The study also considers the role of digital communication in shaping identity, social norms, and generational divides within Mauritanian society, urging a critical approach to the ethics of digital communication in the context of indigenous cultures.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital communication has significantly reshaped how individuals across the globe engage with one another, share ideas, and construct cultural identities. Among the most influential digital platforms in recent years is TikTok—a short-form video-sharing application that has captured the attention of millions, particularly among youth. With its algorithm-driven content, viral challenges, and participatory culture, TikTok has evolved into more than just a source of entertainment; it is now a powerful social medium that shapes moral behavior, public

discourse, and cultural perceptions (Anderson, 2020).

In countries like Mauritania, where traditional moral culture is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, social hierarchy, and oral heritage, the influence of such global platforms presents both opportunities and ethical dilemmas. TikTok offers Mauritanian youth an unprecedented platform for self-expression, creativity, and even socio-political commentary. However, this comes with challenges to established norms of modesty, respect for authority, and communal values.

Furthermore, the platform's inherent design—

emphasizing virality, instant gratification, and visibility—raises ethical concerns about digital addiction, privacy breaches, misinformation, and the commodification of identity (Ess, 2014). In a context where digital literacy is still developing and intergenerational gaps in media use are significant, TikTok becomes a contested space where generational values may collide. The moral culture that once relied on interpersonal transmission through elders and religious leaders is now being renegotiated in digital spaces where influencers and trends often hold greater sway.

This paper reflects on the intersection between digital ethics and indigenous moral culture in Mauritania through the lens of TikTok. It seeks to explore how this platform is reshaping ethical behavior, redefining cultural expression, and challenging the boundaries of tradition and modernity.

### 1.1. Background

Mauritania, a nation located in the Sahel region of West Africa, is characterized by a rich cultural heritage that blends Arab, Berber, and Sub-Saharan African traditions (Jourde, 2017). The majority of the population identifies as Arab-Berber, with a significant portion adhering to Islam, which plays a central role in shaping the country's social and moral fabric (Ould Ahmed Salem, 2013). Mauritania's moral culture is deeply rooted in collective values that emphasize community, respect for elders, honor, and the preservation of customs passed down through generations (Lecocq & Klute, 2013). The transmission of cultural knowledge is traditionally oral, with elders playing a key role in educating younger generations about values, history, and social responsibilities (Alhassan & Tar, 2021).

Historically, Mauritania's indigenous cultures have been transmitted through personal interactions, communal rituals, storytelling, and local gatherings (Ould Cheikh, 2008). These methods fostered a sense of unity and continuity within families and communities, ensuring that cultural values remained intact. However, like many other parts of the world, Mauritania has increasingly been influenced by global digital communication, driven by platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and, more recently, TikTok (Samb & Salih, 2022). The digital revolution has radically transformed how Mauritians communicate, learn, and access

information, bringing both positive and negative consequences to their moral and cultural landscapes (Ess, 2014; Sylla, 2020).

TikTok, a social media platform that allows users to create and share short videos, has become particularly influential in Mauritania (Samb & Salih, 2022). Initially, it was popular among younger generations for its entertainment value, but it has rapidly evolved into a space for political expression, social commentary, and cultural discourse (Anderson, 2020). The platform's global reach means that Mauritians are not only exposed to content created within their own cultural context but also to a vast array of trends, ideas, and lifestyles from across the world. While this global exposure can serve as a tool for broadening perspectives, it can also create tensions with traditional moral frameworks, as content on TikTok may not always align with the values upheld by Mauritanian society (Ess, 2014; Ould Ahmed Salem, 2013).

The advent of TikTok in Mauritania is a reflection of a broader trend in the digital age, where indigenous cultures are simultaneously facing the pressures of globalization and the desire to preserve their unique identities (Nyamnjoh, 2013). While some view the platform as a vehicle for promoting Mauritanian culture on the global stage, others are concerned that it undermines traditional values, distorts cultural narratives, and fosters a disconnect between younger and older generations (Ould Cheikh, 2008; Sylla, 2020). The ease with which TikTok enables the spread of diverse ideas and the viral nature of its content can challenge established moral norms, especially when it comes to issues such as modesty, gender roles, and familial obligations, which hold particular importance in Mauritania (Jourde, 2017; Lecocq & Klute, 2013).

This conflict between global digital culture and indigenous moral systems raises important ethical questions: Can digital platforms like TikTok be integrated into Mauritania's cultural ecosystem in ways that respect and preserve traditional values? Or do they pose a threat to the very cultural foundations that have sustained Mauritanian society for centuries? Understanding this dynamic is crucial for fostering an ethical approach to digital communication in Mauritania, one that balances the benefits of modern technology with the need to protect and celebrate indigenous moral cultures.

## 1.2. Research Context

Mauritania is a country where the interplay of tradition and modernity is particularly evident, and the introduction of digital technologies has added complexity to this dynamic. As a nation that has maintained a predominantly oral culture, with strong ties to Islamic teachings and local customs, Mauritania's moral and social values are deeply intertwined with its indigenous practices. These values are passed down through generations via storytelling, communal gatherings, and personal interactions, all of which reinforce the importance of family, respect, and social responsibility.

In recent years, however, Mauritania has experienced rapid technological change, particularly with the increasing use of social media platforms such as TikTok. This digital transformation is part of a global phenomenon where technology reshapes societies, alters modes of communication, and influences cultural practices. TikTok, with its algorithm-driven content and viral nature, has quickly become one of the most influential social media platforms, especially among young people in Mauritania. It is a space where Mauritians, particularly youth, engage with global trends, share personal stories, and produce content that reflects both local and global values.

At the same time, Mauritania's traditional structures—especially in rural areas—are still governed by a moral code that prioritizes communal cohesion, respect for authority, modesty, and deference to religious and cultural norms. These values, while adaptive in some ways, are increasingly challenged by the individualistic, fast-paced, and sometimes provocative content that circulates on platforms like TikTok. The contrast between the slow, deliberate transmission of knowledge in indigenous cultural practices and the rapid, ephemeral nature of digital media creates a tension that is important to understand in order to navigate the ethical dilemmas posed by these technologies.

The research context of this study focuses on the intersection of Mauritania's indigenous moral culture and the disruptive influence of digital communication, particularly through TikTok. The rise of the platform among Mauritanian youth offers a unique lens through which to examine the broader implications of global digital culture on

local moral codes. This context is shaped by several key factors:

1. **Generational Divide:** The younger generation in Mauritania, increasingly exposed to digital platforms like TikTok, is experiencing a shift in how cultural norms are perceived and enacted. In contrast, older generations, who are more rooted in traditional ways, may view this digital shift as a threat to the values they have long upheld. This

generational divide is a critical factor in understanding how cultural preservation and change are unfolding.

2. **Islamic Influence:** Islam plays a central role in Mauritania's moral framework. Traditional Islamic values shape community life, ethical behavior, and individual roles. Digital platforms like TikTok, which often carry content that may challenge or subvert religious norms, represent a complex intersection of modernity and religious conservatism. The role of digital media in negotiating these ethical boundaries is a key area of inquiry.

3. **Cultural Globalization:** Mauritania is increasingly connected to a globalized digital world where global trends, ideas, and values rapidly influence local contexts. While this connection can provide opportunities for cultural exchange and innovation, it can also lead to the dilution or distortion of local practices. Mauritania's cultural identity is therefore constantly negotiating between global influences and local traditions, and TikTok serves as a potent platform where this interaction is magnified.

4. **Moral and Ethical Concerns:** TikTok's algorithms promote viral content, often prioritizing entertainment and sensation over depth or cultural sensitivity. This can lead to the commodification of local traditions or the presentation of Mauritanian culture in ways that may not resonate with indigenous moral values. The ethical implications of such content—ranging from concerns about privacy, misrepresentation, and the erosion of cultural dignity—are critical to this study.

In this context, the research aims to explore how TikTok's influence on Mauritanian society both challenges and reshapes traditional moral codes. It seeks to understand whether digital platforms can coexist with and even support the preservation of indigenous cultures, or if they pose a threat to the

ethical foundations that have sustained these cultures for generations. By examining the Mauritanian experience, this research contributes to the broader debate on the role of digital communication in the preservation or transformation of indigenous moral cultures in a globalized world.

### 1.3. Research Problem

The research problem of this study revolves around the ethical challenges posed by TikTok as a platform for digital communication, particularly regarding its impact on human relationships, privacy, mental health, and identity. This study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of these issues in order to foster a more ethical and mindful approach to digital communication in the age of social media.

### 1.4. Research Questions

Here are several potential research questions that explore ethics in the age of digital communication, focusing on TikTok and indigenous moral culture, with a specific lens on the Mauritanian context:

1. How does TikTok use in Mauritania affect the transmission and evolution of indigenous moral values and cultural norms?
2. What ethical issues arise from how Mauritanian culture is represented on TikTok, and how do these affect authenticity and appropriation?
3. How is TikTok shaping the moral behavior and cultural identity of young people in Mauritania?
4. What role do elders play in guiding or regulating TikTok content, and what does this reveal about the link between tradition and modern media ethics?

### 1.5. Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore the ethical challenges posed by TikTok's influence on communication, self-representation, and privacy, with a particular focus on its impact on indigenous cultures in Mauritania. As TikTok becomes increasingly popular, understanding its role in shaping cultural identities and ethical norms is crucial. By examining the tension between modernity and tradition in Mauritania, this research seeks to contribute to broader discussions on media ethics, cultural preservation, and the adaptation of ethical

frameworks in the digital age.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Ethics in the digital age: General overview

The digital age demands a reevaluation of ethical principles, as platforms like TikTok introduce new dilemmas about privacy, representation, and the commodification of identity, challenging traditional cultural norms" (Miller, 2023). In the digital age, social media platforms have become powerful tools for communication, information sharing, and community building. However, with great influence comes great responsibility. The ethical considerations surrounding social media platforms are increasingly significant. From privacy violations and misinformation to content moderation and mental health effects, the ethical landscape of social media is complex and evolving. One of the most pressing ethical concerns is privacy. Users often share large amounts of personal information without fully understanding how it is collected or used by platforms. TikTok, as a space for cultural expression and viral content, simultaneously fosters creativity and introduces ethical concerns about data privacy, digital exploitation, and the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes" (Fuchs, 2020, p. 78).

Particularly on adolescents—deserves critical ethical consideration. Many platforms are designed to be addictive, using persuasive design techniques that exploit users' psychology. The anonymity of digital platforms can lead to harmful behavior that would be less likely to occur in face-to-face communication. Ethical digital communication requires empathy, respect, and accountability. Sherry Turkle, a prominent MIT professor and author, has been a leading voice in examining the psychological and ethical impacts of digital communication. Her opinion on the topic is generally critical, especially when it comes to how technology shapes human relationships, empathy, identity, and communication ethics. Turkle argues that digital communication (e.g., texting, social media, messaging apps) fosters surface-level interactions that lack depth. She believes we're losing the ability to engage in meaningful, face-to-face conversations, which are essential for developing empathy and understanding. (Turkle, S. 2011. *Alone together*.) Why we expect more from technology and less from each other.

TikTok, initially launched as a niche platform for

lip-syncing videos, has quickly evolved into a global cultural phenomenon. Since merging with Musical.ly in 2018, TikTok has transformed into a short-form video-sharing platform with a unique algorithm that prioritizes user engagement and content appeal over follower count. The platform's "For You Page" (FYP) uses machine learning to recommend videos based on user interactions, preferences, and content popularity, fueling the rapid spread of viral trends, memes, music, and dance challenges. TikTok's features, such as user-friendly editing tools, duet and stitch functions, and an extensive music library, empower global users to remix and create content easily.

TikTok accelerates and democratizes youth culture, acting as a virtual meeting space where young people from various countries engage with the same trends while adapting them to local contexts. This results in a global yet localized exchange of cultural practices, allowing young people to connect over shared aesthetic and comedic sensibilities.

### 2.1.1. Shared Aesthetics and Humor

The platform has contributed to the development of a universal internet-savvy visual language. Aesthetic trends such as "coastal grandmother," "cottagecore," and "clean girl" travel rapidly, influencing a global sense of humor and style among Generation Z. TikTok has become a space where cultural symbols, visual languages, and humor formats spread quickly and widely.

### 2.1.2. Cross-Cultural Exchange

TikTok showcases a diverse range of cultures, providing opportunities for educational and celebratory exchanges. Dance routines based on Afrobeats, K-pop, or South Asian traditions often go viral, giving users from around the world exposure to new cultural touchpoints and music, enhancing their cultural awareness.

### 2.1.3. Music and Language

Music is central to TikTok's appeal, with songs in non-English languages—such as Spanish reggaeton, Korean pop, and Indian Bollywood hits—trending globally. This exposure reshapes young people's music tastes and promotes linguistic diversity, fostering cultural openness.

### 2.1.4. Activism and Ideologies

Beyond entertainment, TikTok has emerged as a platform for activism and social justice movements. Young people use it to share educational content, protest injustice, and organize campaigns, such as climate strikes or feminist advocacy. This has fostered a global sense of solidarity, as the platform gives voice to various movements worldwide.

However, TikTok's algorithmic nature is not without its drawbacks. Content moderation policies have been criticized for disproportionately favoring certain demographics and silencing marginalized voices. The platform's tendency to prioritize Western or U.S.-centric content has led to concerns about its global reach and inclusivity. Additionally, the app's ownership by the Chinese company ByteDance has raised geopolitical tensions, contributing to bans and regulatory concerns in countries such as India and the U.S.

## 2.2. TikTok's Ethical Challenges

While TikTok has reshaped youth culture globally, it faces significant ethical concerns related to privacy, misinformation, and the psychological impact on users.

### 2.2.1. Privacy Concerns and Data Collection

TikTok collects a vast amount of personal data, including location, browsing habits, and preferences, raising concerns about user privacy. While TikTok claims to comply with privacy regulations like the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), its connections to the Chinese government have sparked global concerns about surveillance and data misuse. The platform has made efforts to store user data in the U.S. and Singapore to alleviate fears of Chinese government access, but its past data breaches and links to ByteDance continue to fuel privacy debates.

### 2.2.2. Misinformation and Content Moderation

TikTok's algorithm promotes content based on engagement metrics, such as likes and shares, rather than accuracy, enabling the spread of misinformation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the platform became a breeding ground for conspiracy theories. While TikTok has implemented fact-checking measures, the rapid spread of content and the scale of moderation required make it difficult to control the dissemination of false information. This highlights the ethical dilemma of balancing freedom of expression with the responsibility to prevent

harmful content.

### 2.2.3. Psychological Impact on Users

The algorithm-driven design of TikTok has also raised concerns about its psychological impact on users, particularly young audiences. TikTok's endless stream of personalized content has been linked to increased screen time, anxiety, depression, and body image issues. Studies show that prolonged social media use can distort young people's sense of reality, especially when it comes to social comparison. TikTok's algorithm, which reinforces addictive usage patterns, has been criticized for contributing to a culture of unrealistic beauty standards and unhealthy behaviors. The platform's role in potentially exacerbating mental health issues poses an ethical challenge about its responsibility to mitigate such impacts.

### 2.2.4. Indigenous Moral Cultures and Their Significance

Indigenous moral cultures offer valuable insights into ethical living, community engagement, and environmental stewardship. These cultures emphasize relationality, reciprocity, and respect for the natural world, offering an alternative to Western individualistic frameworks. Indigenous moral values are embedded in cultural narratives and practices, reinforcing collective well-being and environmental sustainability.

### 2.2.5. Relationality and Reciprocity

At the core of Indigenous ethics is the concept of relationality, which asserts that all beings—human, animal, and plant—are interconnected. This interconnectedness fosters a deep responsibility to maintain harmony within the community and with the environment. Reciprocity, the practice of balanced giving and receiving, is also central, ensuring mutual flourishing and sustainability. Ethical behavior in Indigenous cultures is seen as an obligation to engage respectfully with nature and other communities.

### 2.2.6. Respect for All Life Forms

Many Indigenous moral systems reject anthropocentrism, recognizing the intrinsic value of animals, plants, and ecosystems. These ethical systems promote an ethic of care that transcends human concerns and extends to all forms of life. Moral transgressions are understood not only in

terms of harm to humans but also in terms of ecological imbalance, highlighting the sacredness of all life.

### 2.3. Cultural Transmission Through Storytelling

Indigenous cultures pass on moral values through oral traditions and storytelling, ensuring the continuity of ethical teachings across generations. Stories serve as repositories of moral knowledge and guides for social regulation. These narratives help contextualize ethical teachings within the community and ensure they remain relevant in a changing world.

### 2.4. The Impact of Modernity and Globalization on Indigenous Moral Codes

Modernity and globalization have significantly impacted Indigenous moral cultures, often undermining traditional value systems. The spread of capitalist values, individualism, and technological advancement has clashed with Indigenous communal practices that prioritize collective well-being and environmental sustainability.

### 2.5. Challenges from Modernity

The encroachment of Western ideas and capitalist models has led to the erosion of Indigenous languages, cultural practices, and ecological knowledge. Globalization's promotion of cultural homogenization has further marginalized Indigenous communities, weakening their moral frameworks and traditions. Despite these challenges, many Indigenous communities have mobilized to preserve their cultures through activism, education, and language revitalization efforts.

#### 2.5.1. Indigenous Resilience and Adaptation

Indigenous communities have shown resilience in the face of modernity by adapting their moral codes to contemporary challenges. Movements such as the Zapatistas in Mexico and Idle No More in Canada demonstrate how Indigenous groups are asserting their traditional values in the face of global capitalism. These efforts highlight the ongoing relevance of Indigenous ethics in discussions of sustainability, justice, and human rights.

### 2.6. TikTok in the Mauritanian Context

TikTok's rise in Mauritania reflects the country's dynamic cultural shifts and the increasing digital literacy of its youth. TikTok has become a significant platform for Mauritians, especially in urban areas like Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. The platform has allowed young Mauritians to engage with global trends while experimenting with local content that reflects Mauritanian dialects, music, and social norms. However, the platform's challenge to traditional moral values—especially in terms of modesty, gender roles, and public criticism—has generated backlash, particularly from older generations and religious authorities.

TikTok in Mauritania acts as a cultural outlet, empowering marginalized voices, particularly women, to address issues like gender inequality and domestic expectations. Despite criticisms of fostering narcissism and moral decay, TikTok has become a tool for self-expression and social activism, giving Mauritanian youth a platform for global engagement and local transformation.

The influence of TikTok in Mauritania underscores a broader global trend where digital platforms challenge traditional moral values and provide new spaces for cultural expression and social change.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible —Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018, p. 10) This study adopts a qualitative research method designed to capture detailed insights into individuals' experiences and attitudes. It emphasizes the interpretation of participants' statements to uncover their underlying meanings and to present a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives.

#### 3.2. Sampling

This study adopted a qualitative research design and employed purposive sampling to select 40 Mauritanian TikTok users, comprising both male and female participants between the ages of 18 and 35. This age range was chosen because it represents the most active demographic on TikTok in Mauritania, allowing for a more accurate reflection of digital engagement and cultural expression. The sample size was considered

sufficient to reach data saturation while enabling an in-depth exploration of users' experiences, motivations, and interactions with indigenous moral culture on the platform. Gender balance and age diversity were taken into account to ensure a variety of perspectives and enhance the credibility and richness of the findings.

#### 3.3. Data Collection Tool

A total of 40 individuals were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, gender, and digital media usage. Data were gathered through a semi-structured questionnaire combining open- and close-ended questions. This tool enabled the collection of both quantitative data on behavior patterns and qualitative insights into perceptions of cultural values and the impact of platforms like TikTok.

The questionnaire focused on exploring participants' views on indigenous moral values, their interaction with modern digital platforms—particularly TikTok—and the perceived impact of social media on cultural identity and behavior. Questions aimed to assess how individuals navigate traditional norms in the context of rapidly changing digital environments.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis for qualitative inputs and basic statistical tools for quantitative data. Key findings show a strong adherence to traditional values, especially among older participants. Younger individuals, more active on platforms like TikTok, reflected a blend of modern and indigenous moral influences. Overall, social media appeared not to replace but rather reshape cultural norms, allowing traditional values to adapt within digital spaces.

- What is your Gender ?

40 responses

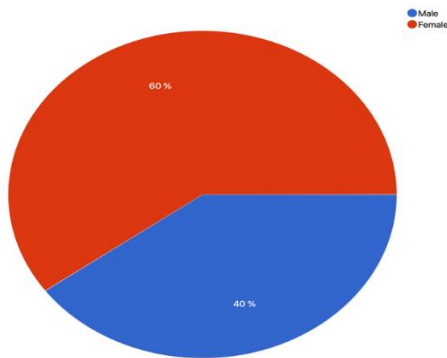


Figure 1: Gender results

The first chart displayed in Figure 1 illustrates the gender distribution of the study participants. Out of 40 respondents, 60% (24) identified as female, while 40% (16) identified as male.

- Age?

40 responses

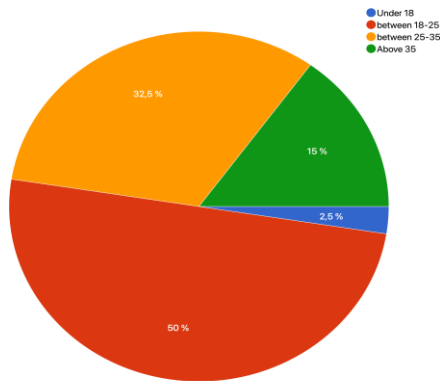


Figure 2: Age Results

The second chart in Figure 2 represents the age distribution of the participants. Among the 40 respondents we have :

- 1 participant (2,5%) were under the age of 18.
- 20 participants (50%) were between 18 and 25 years old,
- 13 participants (32,5 %) were between 25 and 35 years old
- 6 participants (15%) were above 35 years old.

The age distribution shows that the majority of participants (82.5%) are between 18 and 35 years old, indicating a predominantly young sample. This suggests that the findings largely reflect the views and experiences of youth and young adults.

- Do you use tiktok ?

40 responses

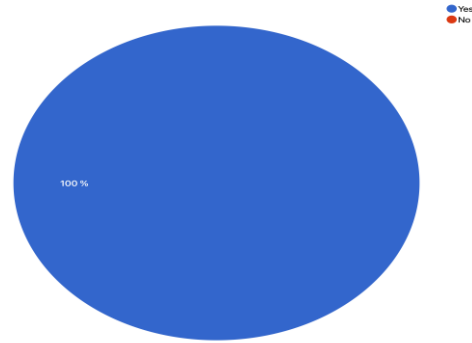


Figure 3: TikTok Use

Among the 40 participants ,when asked do you use TikTok the answer was one hundred percent yes shown in the Figure 3.

- How often do you use TikTok?

40 responses

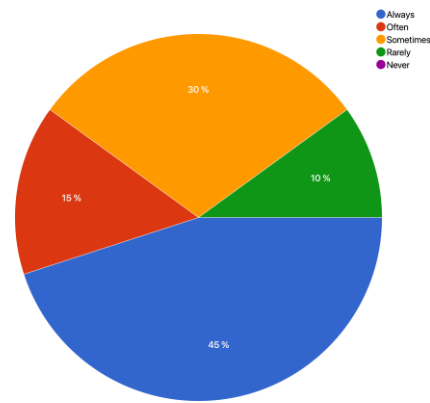


Figure 4: TikTok Use Percentage

Regarding the question of how often the participant use TikTok the answers were:

- 45% (18)answered “Always”
- 30% (12) answered “sometimes.”
- 15% (6) answered “ often”
- 10% (4) answered “Rarely”
- Notably, no participants selected “Never.”

The data shows high TikTok usage among participants, all participants use TikTok to some extent, with 45% indicating they use it always. The absence of “Never” responses highlights the platform’s strong presence in their daily lives (see Figure 4).

**4.1. TikTok and the notions of Cultural Representation/ Misrepresentation**

- How would you rate the accuracy of

Mauritanian cultural representation on TikTok ?  
40 responses

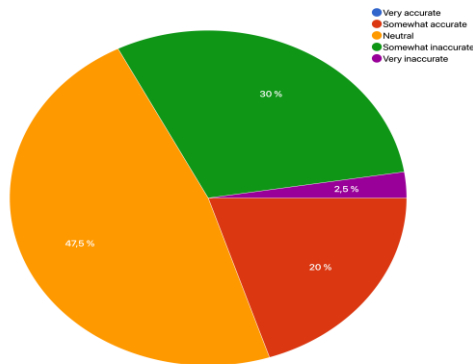


Figure 5: TikTok and the notions of Cultural Representation

- 47,5% (19) answered “neutral”
- 30% (12) answered “somewhat inaccurate.”
- 20% (8) answered “somewhat accurate”
- 2,5% (1) answered “very inaccurate”
- Remarkably , no participants selected “very accurate.”

The responses in Figure 5 suggest a predominantly neutral to skeptical view regarding the accuracy of Mauritanian cultural representation on TikTok. Nearly half (47.5%) of participants remained neutral, while 32.5% rated it as somewhat or very inaccurate. Only 20% found it somewhat accurate, and notably, none rated it as very accurate. This indicates a general uncertainty or lack of strong confidence in how authentically Mauritanian culture is portrayed on the platform.

- Have you seen content that misrepresents Mauritanian values or traditions on TikTok?

40 responses

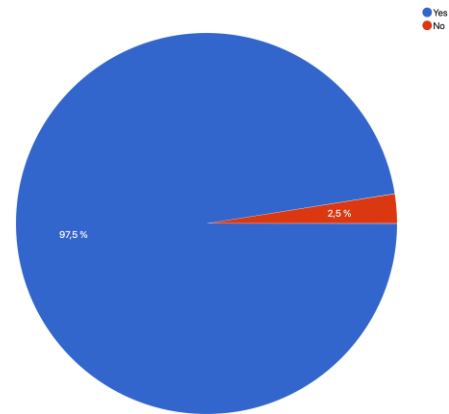


Figure 6: Traditions on TikTok

Regarding the question Have you seen content that misrepresents Mauritanian values or traditions on TikTok, 39 (97,5 % ) respondents said yes where 1 respondent (2,5%)

The overwhelming majority of participants (97.5%) reported encountering content on TikTok that misrepresents Mauritanian values or traditions. This strong consensus suggests a widespread perception of cultural distortion or misunderstanding on the platform, raising concerns about the authenticity and accuracy of cultural content shared online (see Figure 6).

4.2. The Intersection of TikTok and the Mauritanian Indigenous Moral Culture:

- How concerned are you about the influence of TikTok on young people’s moral behavior in Mauritania ?

40 responses

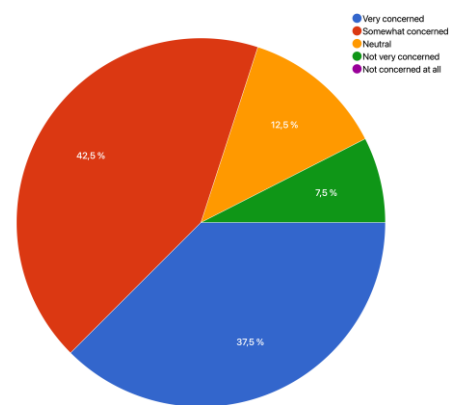


Figure 7: Behavior of Young People Regarding the question of How concerned are you

about the influence of TikTok on young people’s moral behavior in Mauritania:

- 42,5 % (17) of respondents answered “somewhat concerned”
- 37,5 % (15) answered “very concerned”
- 12,5 % (5) answered “neutral”
- 7,5 % (3) answered “not very concerned”
- Notably, no participants selected “not concerned at all.”

The majority of participants expressed concern about TikTok’s influence on young people’s moral behavior in Mauritania, with 80% indicating they are either somewhat or very concerned. Only a small minority (7.5%) reported low concern, and none selected “not concerned at all,” highlighting a strong collective awareness and apprehension regarding the platform’s moral impact on youth (see Figure 7).

#### 4.3. The Impact of Digital Communication on Mauritanian Indigenous Culture

- Do you believe that digital platforms like TikTok are changing Mauritanian cultural practices ?

40 responses

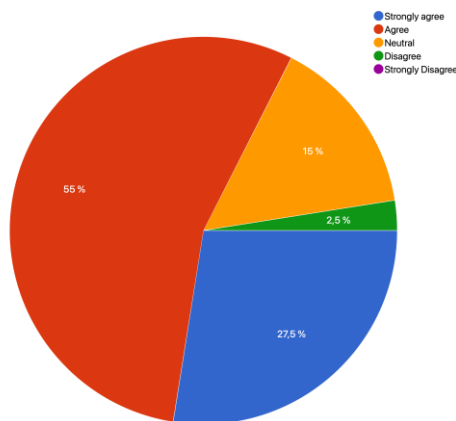


Figure 8: Mauritanian cultural practices  
When asked Do you believe that digital platforms like TikTok are changing Mauritanian cultural practices the answers were :

- 55 % (22) answered “Agree”
- 27,5 % (11) answered “Strongly agree ”
- 15 % (6) answered “neutral”
- 2,5 % (1) answered “Disagree”
- Importantly, no participants selected “Strongly

disagree.”

The results demonstrate a clear consensus among participants regarding the transformative impact of digital platforms like TikTok on Mauritanian cultural practices. A combined 82.5% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that these platforms are driving cultural change, indicating widespread recognition of digital media as a significant agent of cultural influence. The 15% who remained neutral may reflect uncertainty or varied experiences with this cultural shift, while the very small minority (2.5%) who disagreed suggests minimal resistance to this perception. Notably, the absence of any “strongly disagree” responses underscore the overall acceptance of digital platforms as influential in shaping contemporary Mauritanian culture. These findings highlight the importance of considering the role of social media in cultural evolution, especially among younger demographics who are the most active users (see Figure 8).

- Do you think there should be ethical guidelines for TikTok content creators in Mauritania ?

40 responses

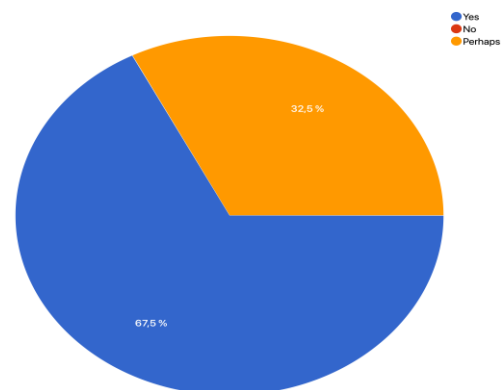


Figure 9: TikTok content creators in Mauritania

- 67,5 % (27) answered “Yes”
  - 32,5 % (13) answered “Perhaps ”
  - None of the participants answered “NO”
- The vast majority of responses express a strong conviction that there should be ethical guidelines for TikTok users in Mauritania (see Figure 9).

- Do you think that TikTok should be banned in Mauritania to preserve cultural and

ethical values?  
40 responses

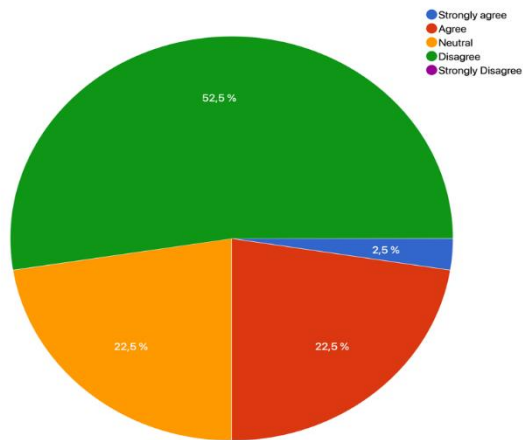


Figure 10: TikTok should be banned in Mauritania to preserve cultural and ethical values?

The results demonstrated that :

- 52,5 % (21) answered “Disagree”
- 22,5 % (9) answered “agree ”
- 22,5 % (9) answered “neutral”
- 2,5 % (1) answered “strongly agree”
- None of the participants answered “strongly disagree”

The results reveal a divided stance on whether TikTok should be banned to preserve Mauritanian cultural and ethical values. A slight majority (52.5%) disagreed with banning the platform, suggesting that many participants favor maintaining access despite concerns. Meanwhile, 25% (combining “agree” and “strongly agree”) supported a ban, indicating a significant portion worried about TikTok’s cultural impact. The notable 22.5% neutral responses reflect ambivalence or uncertainty. The absence of “strongly disagree” answers may suggest that outright opposition to the idea of banning is limited, highlighting a nuanced debate around balancing cultural preservation with digital engagement (see Figure 10).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the rapid expansion of digital communication platforms, particularly TikTok, has significantly impacted how individuals in Mauritania, especially youth, engage with cultural

values, ethical norms, and modes of self-expression. While these platforms serve as powerful tools for creativity, entertainment, and global connectivity, they also raise important ethical questions about identity, privacy, authenticity, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The findings of this study reveal that the overwhelming majority of respondents strongly believe in the need to uphold traditional moral values in the face of increasing exposure to globalized, and often contrasting, digital content. This tension reflects a broader societal concern about the potential erosion of Mauritania’s indigenous moral culture under the influence of digital trends that may not align with local norms. At the same time, the digital space offers new avenues for moral negotiation and cultural reinterpretation, allowing young Mauritians to reassert their values in modern forms.

Therefore, it is imperative to approach digital ethics not merely as a matter of platform regulation or content control, but as a culturally embedded process that respects and integrates indigenous worldviews. In the Mauritanian context, this means fostering awareness, dialogue, and education that bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. Ethical engagement with platforms like TikTok must go beyond censorship or moral panic and instead encourage a critical understanding of how digital tools can be used responsibly, in ways that honor and sustain local moral cultures. As Mauritania continues to navigate the digital age, the development of a culturally grounded ethical framework will be essential to ensure that technological innovation enhances rather than undermines the values that define its social fabric.

### • Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed to support ethical digital communication on TikTok while preserving and promoting Mauritania’s Indigenous moral culture:

#### 1. Promote Digital Literacy with Ethical Foundations

Educational institutions, civil society, and media organizations should collaborate to integrate digital ethics education into youth programs. This education must:

- Emphasize respect for cultural values and traditions in online content.
- Address responsible content creation, privacy, and digital identity.

## 2. Encourage Cultural Content Creation

Mauritanian TikTok users should be encouraged to create content that:

- Showcases traditional music, poetry, dress, and storytelling.
- Reflects values such as respect for elders, community solidarity, and modesty.
- Counters negative or harmful representations with pride in Indigenous heritage.

## 3. Develop Context-Sensitive Content Moderation

TikTok and other platforms should consider collaborating with local cultural experts to develop moderation guidelines that respect cultural sensitivities.

- *Limitations*

### 1. Access to Data and Digital Footprints

- TikTok data is often private or algorithm-driven, making it hard to gather representative data without violating privacy or needing advanced digital tools.
- In the Mauritanian context, data about TikTok usage patterns, demographic breakdowns, or cultural impact may be limited or undocumented.

### 2. Cultural Sensitivities

- Discussing indigenous moral cultures can be delicate. These cultures are often oral, diverse, and resistant to generalization.
- There's also a risk of cultural essentialism—portraying Mauritanian culture as static, when in reality it evolves and adapts.

### 3. Ethical Ambiguity in the Platform

- TikTok's content can be interpreted in multiple, subjective ways depending on the viewer's values.
- The platform encourages irony, mimicry, and performance, which may challenge traditional ethical frameworks in unpredictable ways.

### 4. Generational Divide

- Younger and older Mauritians may experience TikTok very differently. The ethical conflicts may reflect more of a generational shift than a direct clash between TikTok and

traditional ethics.

## 5. Scope and Representativeness

- TikTok users in Mauritania may represent a small, urban, or elite subset of the population, limiting the generalizability of your findings.

- Many rural or nomadic communities may not engage with TikTok, making a full reflection of indigenous culture difficult.

## 6. Rapid Technological Change

- TikTok's algorithms, features, and popularity change rapidly, making your findings potentially time-sensitive or quickly outdated.

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