

WHEN NOSTALGIA GOES VIRAL: THE UNIVERSAL DAY OF THE ROMANIAN BLOUSE

ELEONORA SAVA*

SIMONA ALBOI*

Abstract This study offers an anthropological approach to a celebration of Romanian identity: the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse. Initially launched as an online initiative in 2013 and rapidly embraced by a wide community of Romanians both at home and abroad, the celebration was later officially recognized by law in 2022. The analysis demonstrates that this phenomenon emerged from a complex constellation of factors, the most significant being the search for identity in a globalized world and the viral dissemination of online content carrying symbolic and identity-driven meanings, both specific to contemporary digital culture. Within a global context marked by cultural homogenization, nostalgia operates as a psychological force of reconnection to one's roots, transforming the past into a usable cultural resource and providing coherence to the present through the rewriting of tradition. The Romanian blouse becomes a transnational marker of identity, projected into the global sphere through image circulation and the affective participation of digital communities. The phenomenon analysed illustrates the capacity of digital culture to generate new forms of continuity through the intersection of memory, technology, and emotion.

Keywords Identity celebration, Romanian blouse, virality, nostalgia, globalization.

In 2012-2013, Romania witnessed a visible revival of the Romanian traditional blouse (*ie/ia*)¹ as a symbol of national identity. The phenomenon gained increasing visibility in the following years. It

* Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. ariadna.sava@ubbcluj.ro.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0616-1572>.

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* Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. simona.alboi@ubbcluj.ro.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4217-2179>.

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¹ The Romanian word for the traditional blouse is *ie*, or, with a definite article, the word is *ia*.

culminated in 2022, when an official celebration dedicated to the *ie* was established by law² and when the Romanian traditional blouse was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity³. This study traces the moment of convergence within this process, offering an anthropological analysis of one of the key elements that contributed to the revitalization and re-signification of the Romanian blouse in both national and international public spaces: the creation, in 2013, of the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, celebrated annually on 24th of June.

In January 2013, on the Facebook page "La blouse roumaine,"⁴ an unsigned post proposed 24 June as the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse. 24 June was the exact date on which Romanian rural communities in past centuries celebrated the summer solstice (midsummer), a traditional holiday known as *Sânziene*. Shortly afterwards, a wide range of institutions (public and private) with ethnographic, cultural, artistic, fashion, design, administrative, or commercial profiles embraced the idea and began organizing large-scale events dedicated to the Romanian blouse around the 24th of June. Diplomatic representations and institutions abroad soon joined in, together with cultural associations in Romania and across the diaspora. Equally significant was the individual participation of many people (without institutional affiliation), from both Romania and diaspora, who promoted the event on social media, particularly on Facebook. In June 2013, the success was overwhelming: "six continents, 48 countries, 109 localities, 143 events"⁵ took part in the first edition, under the motto *Sânzienele îmbracă planeta în ie* ("The Sânziene Dress the Planet in Ie"). In the following years, the celebration received extensive media coverage, and in 2022, the Day of the Romanian Blouse was institutionalized by law. What emerged was a new *identity celebration*, shaped through the reinterpretation of elements drawn from vernacular culture. The specific features of this new form of celebration can be summarized as follows: (a) a bottom-up dynamic, originating from a small, independent group with no political, scientific, or institutional authority; (b) a mode of dissemination that relied predominantly – though not exclusively – on the Facebook network; (c) an exceptionally swift adhesion among Romanians across social categories; (d) a broad resonance both within the country and throughout the diaspora; and (e) the eventual legislative consecration of the initiative.

² Law no. 211/2022 regarding the establishment of the "Romanian Blouse's Day," published in *Monitorul Oficial al României (Official Gazette of Romania)*, no. 682, July 8, 2022.

³ In December 2022, "The art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*) – an element of cultural identity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova" was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/the-art-of-the-traditional-blouse-with-embroidery-on-the-shoulder-alti-an-element-of-cultural-identity-in-romania-and-the-republic-of-moldova-01861>, accessed 08.07.2025.

⁴ The Facebook page was created in 2012 and categorized as a "Community." Its name, *La blouse roumaine*, derives from the homonymous painting by the French artist Henri Matisse, which is also used as the page's profile image. Accessed July 8, 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/LaBlouseRoumaine10>.

⁵ Adriana Szabo and Lia Gheorghe, "Ziua Universală a ieii" / "Universal Ie Day", *Gazeta de Maramureș* (July 2nd, 2013), <https://www.gazetademaramures.ro/ziua-universala-a-ieii-13871>, accessed August 8, 2025.

The following research questions guide this study: How can a single Facebook post, published in January 2013, account for the institutionalization of a national celebration in less than a decade? And how does virality operate as a cultural mechanism within an event articulated around the symbolic construct of the Romanian traditional blouse? Our hypothesis proposes that the emergence of this new celebration can be understood as the outcome of a complex constellation of interrelated variables, most notably, the search for identity within a globalized world and the viral dissemination of online content infused with symbolic and identity-oriented meanings. These processes, emblematic of contemporary digital culture, illustrate how collective belonging and affective participation are reshaped through the dynamics of networked communication. These two processes are interdependent and closely linked to the dynamics of globalization and cultural homogenization. Our analysis seeks to understand how these elements became interwoven in 2013. The first section of the study addresses the need for identity through theoretical frameworks such as *lieux de mémoire* (Pierre Nora), *nostalgia* (Svetlana Boym; Janelle L. Wilson), *invented traditions* (Eric Hobsbawm), and *usable pasts* (Tad Tuleja). The second section turns to the mechanisms characteristic of contemporary digital culture, focusing particularly on the process of virality. In this context, virality will not be approached as a technological phenomenon but as a complex cultural process through which traditional symbols are re-signified and reintroduced into collective memory. Our analysis aims to demonstrate that the digital environment operates as a new space for the performance of identity, in which memory is reconstructed through participation and intangible cultural heritage is “reactivated” through visibility and circulation. Thus, virality becomes a modern form of symbolic transmission, a renewed way of continuing tradition, this time through networks and algorithms, where emotion, aesthetics, and communal belonging intertwine to produce cohesion and meaning. In the case of the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, this process functioned as a bridge between the need for identity and the logic of social networks, transforming a local practice into a global phenomenon of shared memory.

1. The Need for Identity

In the twenty-first century, the traditional Romanian blouse and the vernacular celebration held on 24th of June (*Sânziene*) function as “*lieux de mémoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself.”⁶ According to Pierre Nora, these *lieux de mémoire* are created at historical moments when people become aware of a rupture with a past they regard as meaningful: “There are *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de mémoire*, real environments of memory.”⁷ The French historian argues that such *lieux de mémoire* emerge with “the irrevocable break marked by the disappearance of peasant culture, that quintessential repository of collective

⁶ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, No. 26 (1989): 7. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

memory whose recent vogue as an object of historical study coincided with the apogee of industrial growth.”⁸

Ia, the traditional Romanian peasant blouse, was once woven, sewn, and embroidered by women within their own households and worn by family members both in daily life and on festive occasions. Beyond its utilitarian function, it carried intimate meanings, an expression of women’s creative labour, familial belonging, and the cyclical rhythm of rural life. Over time, it has shifted from a lived garment to a symbolic artifact, a relic of a world that no longer exists. In cities, the traditional blouse gradually disappeared from everyday use between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (around 1880–1930), as modernization, industrialization, and the rise of urban fashion imposed “city attire” as the new norm. In rural communities, however, the transition was slower. *Ia* continued to be worn for work and household activities into the first half of the twentieth century, surviving locally until the 1950s–1970s, when the traditional peasant class itself began to vanish under the combined effects of industrialization, agricultural collectivization, and urban migration. During the communist decades (1948–1989), the blouse was reappropriated as a national symbol. It was imbued with notions of antiquity, authenticity, and ethnic unity, produced in state-controlled handicraft cooperatives, sold in government shops, and worn by schoolchildren during national celebrations. In this process, *ia* was detached from its lived context and reframed as a heritage emblem within the rhetoric of socialist nationalism. After 1990, *ia* remained a symbol of cultural and national distinctiveness, worn on specific occasions such as folk festivals and community celebrations.

The midsummer feast (*Sânziene*), was also a significant summer celebration for Romanian traditional communities, marking the summer solstice. Like other midsummer festivities found in peasant cultures around the world, it celebrated the rhythms of nature and agricultural work, accompanied by magical beliefs and rituals intended to protect crops, promote household prosperity, safeguard health, and help young women find marriage. The celebration also had a strong mythological aspect, involving the belief in protective mythological beings, similar to fairies, also called *Sânziene*. During the communist era, this celebration lost importance due to major social, cultural, and economic shifts in the late twentieth century. Along with the *ie*, it can be reshaped and reinterpreted in the twenty-first century because it no longer belongs to people’s everyday experiences.

With the “acceleration of history,” as Pierre Nora observes, the *ie* and the *Sânziene* have become *lieux de mémoire*, traces of a bygone world, re-invested with symbolic meaning by contemporary individuals: “As traditional memory disappears, we feel obliged assiduously to collect remains [...] any visible signs of what has been.”⁹ In 2013, these symbols were revitalized and reshaped in a new format, as faded symbols toward which contemporary individuals experience an “ineradicable, almost carnal attachment”, since they embody the core of collective identity: “The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history.”¹⁰ Thus, the new celebration articulates a

⁸ Ibid., 8.

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

renewed cultural sensibility, one concerned with *rehabilitated objects* and *lieux de mémoire* “that anchor, condense, and express the exhausted capital of our collective memory.”¹¹ While Pierre Nora points to the nostalgic dimension of these devotional institutions, we argue that nostalgia itself is the psychological driving force behind the construction of such *lieux de mémoire*.

a. Nostalgia – the Psychological Engine of the New Cultural Product

Just like *lieux de mémoire*, constructs of the modern age, nostalgia is an emotion specific to recent times, generated by the very processes of globalization. As Svetlana Boym demonstrates, “progress didn’t cure nostalgia but exacerbated it. Similarly, globalization encouraged stronger local attachments. In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals.”¹² In the cultural theorist’s definition, “nostalgia (from *nostos* – return home, and *algia* – longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement.”¹³ But what does *home* mean to the contemporary individual? Above all, it carries an emotional significance: it may refer to childhood, to “the roots of one’s being, the security of a private enclave where one can be free and in control of one’s life.”¹⁴ The sociologist Janelle L. Wilson observes that “in this postmodern, multicultural time, home has become a problematic concept. Each of us, it seems, lives simultaneously in many social spheres.”¹⁵ Precisely because of increased mobility and the constant movement from one environment (physical, cultural, or social) to another, the individual feels uprooted and, consequently, longs for roots and for a utopian sense of home: “To feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you; it is a state of mind that doesn’t depend on an actual location. The object of longing, then, is not really a place called home but this sense of intimacy with the world; it is not the past in general, but that imaginary moment when we had time and didn’t know the temptation of nostalgia.”¹⁶ Therefore, *home* often comes to signify tradition and the imagined community of one’s homeland. This is why nostalgia generates in the contemporary individual an acute need to return to one’s origins. Svetlana Boym distinguishes between “two kinds of nostalgia [that] characterize one’s relationship to the past, to the imagined community, to home, to one’s own self-perception: restorative and reflective. They do not explain the nature of longing nor its psychological makeup and unconscious

¹¹ Ibid., 24.

¹² Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (Basic Books, 2002), IV.

¹³ Ibid., XIII.

¹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 121, in Janelle L. Wilson, *Nostalgia. Sanctuary of meaning* (University of Minnesota Publishing, 2014), 32.

¹⁵ Wilson, *Nostalgia*, 33.

¹⁶ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 251.

undercurrents; rather, they are about how we make sense of our seemingly ineffable homesickness and how we view our relationship to a collective home.”¹⁷ Both forms connect individual memory with collective memory: “restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps,” whereas “reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance.”¹⁸ The first category of nostalgia “characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths.”¹⁹ The revitalization and re-signification of the *ie* and the *Sânziene* celebration into a new cultural product, the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, falls within this category of restorative nostalgia.

b. The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse – An Invented Tradition

The examples used by Svetlana Boym to illustrate restorative nostalgia are drawn from Eric Hobsbawm’s well-known work *The Invention of Tradition*.²⁰ According to this framework, an invented tradition is a set of symbolic practices of relatively recent origin that selectively reuses elements of a historical past considered appropriate, thus responding to rapid and wide-ranging social transformations. The celebration analysed in this study corresponds to this definition: the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse is a recent phenomenon (launched in 2013). It signifies the celebration of the *ie*, a representative element of the Romanian folk costume and an emblem of national identity²¹ and is part of a broader movement aimed at reviving respect for traditional dress and reaffirming its cultural and identity value. The symbolic practice it entails is effortless, a simplicity that ensured its widespread appeal from the very beginning: any Romanian, whether living in the country or abroad, wears an *ie* (old or new) on the 24th of June each year, takes a photo, and uploads it on social media and/or in Facebook groups dedicated to the event. For institutions with ethnographic or cultural profiles in Romania, Moldova, and across the diaspora, the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse involves organizing cultural events, exhibitions, and fairs dedicated to the folk costume and to Romanian identity.

All these symbolic forms generate a sense of unity among Romanians everywhere and evoke continuity with a “golden age” of Romanian-ness, symbolized by the *ie* and by the folkloric

¹⁷ Ibid., 41.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions”, in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, (Cambridge University Press, Fifteenth printing, 2007), 1.

²¹ “For Romanians, the blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, associated with the other components of the folk costume, has been and still is a true identity card through which they can express their territorial and ethnic belonging.” Narcisa Știucă, Doina Ișfănoni, Georgiana Onoiu, and Horațiu Silviu Ilea, “National Inventory of Active Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements. The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (altită) — an Element of Cultural Identity in Romania”, 2, <http://temp-18-250.cimec.ro/images/imaterial/camasa-altita/camasa-altita.pdf> (accessed August 28, 2025).

celebration of *Sânziene*.²² The new cultural expression responds to a rapid social transformation: accelerated globalization, often described as a “disease” of our century, which homogenizes cultures and erases the specific features of nations (economic, cultural) producing a pervasive sense of lost identity. As a result, identity must be sought in the past, in a pre-globalized era, perceived as timeless and endowed with the attributes of beauty, stability, and permanence. The icon that best exemplifies this idealized past is the *peasant* as constructed by the political ideology of nineteenth-century national romanticism, perpetuated through the neo-romantic currents of the twentieth century and by the communist nationalism of its latter half, portrayed in an idyllic pastoral light, in harmony with nature, and dressed in a traditional festive blouse. Yet this blouse also came to bear marks of nobility and royalty: Queen Marie of Romania wore the traditional Romanian blouse as an official garment during national celebrations, and under the patronage of the Royal House, the folk costume became fashionable among women of the Romanian elite, adopted as an emblem of national identity.²³ In addition, the traditional blouse is also regarded as an element of fashion and design: in 1981, the Romanian blouse entered the history of haute couture through the collection of the renowned French designer Yves Saint Laurent. Jean-Paul Gaultier, Oscar de la Renta, Carolina Herrera, Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, and Tom Ford are among the other designers who have created collections inspired by Romanian culture. Another defining aspect of the *ie* is its refinement, suggested by the presence of the Romanian blouse in artistic representations such as Henri Matisse’s canonical painting *La Blouse Roumaine*, which first brought international visibility and fame to the garment. Moreover, *ia* has also been associated with folkloric mythology. As stated in the manifesto that announced the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, “the *Sânziene* [beings from Romanian folk mythology who preside over the midsummer celebration on June 24] wore traditional blouses.”²⁴ In this sense, the Romanian blouse gathers within itself the symbolic attributes of continuity and authenticity, of national identity, of nobility, and of refinement, addressing the identity needs of everyone alike: those who see themselves as heirs of the iconic peasant, those who resonate with aristocratic values or with contemporary fashion trends, and those drawn to history, folklore, mythology, or the visual arts. This act of assembling or, in our case, recycling, emotionally and symbolically charged signs of belonging represents the crucial element of invented traditions. As Eric Hobsbawm notes, “their significance lay precisely in their undefined universality: The National Flag, The National Anthem

²² The symbolic nature of the *ie* and of the *Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse* is clearly expressed by its initiator, Andreea Tănăsescu, who stated: “*The Romanian blouse itself is so beautiful, diverse, and full of meaning that, once taken out of the dowry chest, it becomes a universal symbol of Romania and of femininity in general.*”

(Interview with Andreea Tănăsescu, *Bursa*, June 24, 2019, <https://www.bursa.ro/andreea-tanasescu-la-blouse-roumaine-odata-scoasa-din-lada-de-zestre-ia-devine-un-simbol-universal-al-romaniei-si-al-feminitatii-in-general-87124734>, accessed August 29, 2025).

²³ Narcisa Știucă et al., “National Inventory of Active Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements”, 15.

²⁴ Facebook post, January 21, 2013, *La blouse roumaine*, https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.320460091405665&type=3&locale=ro_RO (accessed August 14, 2025).

and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity.”²⁵ To this list, we may now add the symbol of the Romanian blouse, together with the newly established tradition celebrated on June 24.

Although the cultural product analysed here meets almost all the elements of Hobsbawm’s definition, the expression *invented tradition* is not entirely appropriate in this case. First, the British historian conceives the invention of tradition as a phenomenon that operates “from above,” initiated by social elites and then transmitted to the population. In contrast, in this instance, the new tradition emerged “from below”: it was created by a small initial group of individuals who were neither public authorities, nor ethnographic experts, nor elites of any kind. An interesting feature lies in the anonymity of those who initiated the event: the manifesto text from January 2013 was published on the Facebook page “La blouse roumaine” without a signature, and authorship was claimed only later, after the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse had already become a large-scale cultural phenomenon.²⁶ From this anonymous post and this small group, the idea spread rapidly, both among the general public and within ethnographic and cultural institutions in Romania and abroad, soon taking shape as a national and international event. Studying cultural processes that evolve *from the bottom up*, the American folklorist Tad Tuleja argues that Hobsbawm’s thesis should be revised to recognize that those without political power can also possess the power to invent: “ethnic groups, regional groups, organizational and occupational groups, families: all such groups may find themselves creatively utilizing ‘past practices’ [...] as manipulable markers of a common identity.”²⁷ Furthermore, the term *invented* in Hobsbawm’s formulation carries an implicit accusation toward such traditions, that of not being *authentic*. Yet authenticity is a highly sensitive and much-debated concept in folklore studies and cultural anthropology. It largely depends on one’s perspective: viewed through the lens of the specialist studying the phenomenon from outside the community that practices it (the *etic* perspective) through the eyes of those who actually perform and live that tradition (the *emic* perspective). What appears to the scholar as *invented* may appear to the insider as *authentic*. Both viewpoints can be equally valuable. From the *etic* standpoint, one could consider the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse an invented tradition. However, from the inside, through the emic lens of

²⁵ Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions,” 11.

²⁶ The first clear public acknowledgment of authorship appears in an interview from June 24, 2015, in which Andreea Tănăsescu, presented as the founder of the *La blouse roumaine* community, explains that the project June 24 – The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse was originally conceived as a Facebook communication strategy, thus formally assuming the initiative first launched in 2013. See AGERPRES, “IA, ieri și azi / Andreea Tănăsescu (*La blouse roumaine*): Ia nu se va transforma, trebuie să înțelegem de ce e mereu la modă” [*IA, Yesterday and Today / Andreea Tănăsescu (La blouse roumaine): The Romanian Blouse Will Not Change; We Need to Understand Why It Is Always in Fashion*], June 24, 2015. Accessed August 18, 2025. <https://www.agerpres.ro/lifestyle/2015/06/24/ia-ieri-si-azi-andreea-tanasescu-la-blouse-roumaine-ia-nu-se-va-transforma-trebuie-sa-intelegem-de-ce-e-mereu-la-moda-11-58-21>.

²⁷ Tad Tuleja, “Introduction. Making Ourselves Up: On the Manipulation of Tradition in Small Groups”, in *Usable pasts: Traditions and group expressions in North America*, ed. Tad Tuleja (Utah State University Press, 1997), 3.

contemporary popular culture consumers, it can be interpreted as a creative response to globalization and cultural homogenization.

c. The Romanian blouse and the Sânzienze Celebration – Usable Pasts

The American folklorist Tad Tuleja observes that, however fascinating, the controversy over what is *authentic* or *invented* “matter[s] little to the ‘folk.’ Scholars may rail against the contaminating influence of mass culture, but few small group members seem to share their outrage. They use ‘spurious’ [...] resources with the same delight as ‘genuine’ [...] ones in the creative reconstitution of their group expressions – and they do so without losing a sense of their own distinctiveness.”²⁸ To move beyond the dichotomy between *authentic* and *invented*, Tuleja foregrounds the *emic* perspective and introduces the notion of *usable pasts*,²⁹ a term free of any pejorative connotation. The phrase designates a way of rewriting traditions in which the past becomes a manipulable resource, imagined as a lost paradise whose memory serves as a talisman against the anxieties of modernity. In this interpretation, emphasis is placed on the malleability and dynamism of traditions. The folklorist explains this reshaping of the past through *reactivity*, the psychological need for national identity, which becomes particularly acute during periods of social or political crisis. Through this lens, the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse can be understood as a creative response to cultural homogenization and globalization. Of course, the idea that “external pressure can make folklore ‘matter’ reactively”³⁰ is not at all new; it begins with the “discovery” of folklore by the intellectual elites of the Romantic period. Just as the construction of nation-states in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries emerged from movements of cultural nationalism, largely articulated around the idea of folklore, and developed as a reaction to the policies of empires and multinational states, so too the consolidation and success of various forms of nationalism (both cultural and political, for “all nationalism is cultural nationalism”³¹) in the contemporary period can be seen as a response to international phenomena such as globalization. This reactivity can also be observed on a smaller scale, within social or even family groups: “the players change, but the marking process remains familiar. In that process [...], the past becomes usable not for itself, or even for the present, but for the future. One wears a dashiki or a kilt [...] to resist homogeny, to create a ‘counter-memory’ that can facilitate self-recovery.”³² While some folklorists tend to regard tradition as a stable entity that can be degraded or “polluted” through contact with outsiders, in reality, “actual communities [...] do not exist [...] in hermetic bubbles. They [...] can be animated rather than crushed by outside irritants – moved to rechannel the streams of their

²⁸ Ibid., 11.

²⁹ “Among the cultural resources available for creating a usable past is the very idea of the past itself, the idea of common heritage and shared memories.” Ibid., 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 14.

³¹ Joep Leerssen, *The Cultivation of Culture. Towards a Definition of Romantic Nationalism in Europe* (Opleiding Europese Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2005), 4 *passim*.

³² Tuleja, “Introduction. Making Ourselves Up,” 14.

peculiar expressivities by the very forces that threaten to stop their flow. This is not to minimize the hazards of cultural homogeny, but only to highlight the benefits of creative response.”³³ In this perspective, the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse can be seen as a form of reconfiguration of vernacular elements, a reaction to cultural homogenization. This approach has the advantage of offering a convincing explanation for the extraordinarily rapid transformation of an idea launched on Facebook into a genuine cultural phenomenon. On June 23, 2013, the Romanian press described it as “an unprecedented initiative,” “uniting lovers of Romania from all corners of the world.” In the same tone, articles noted that “to celebrate the beautiful traditional blouse, the online community ‘La blouse roumaine’ sounded the call to action; the reactions are overwhelming; Romanians had longed for an initiative that would restore their sense of belonging and national pride”³⁴. Such a success of this newly created event can be interpreted as a reaction to external stimuli: “at precisely the moment when universal culture – the culture of ‘Cocacolonization’ – seeks to palliate, and thus obliterate, stylistic distinctions. In this atmosphere, to embrace an ethnic or regional or intentional style becomes, far more than a quirk of identity, a centrifugal empowerment. In their zest for the particular, the actors here enlist ‘survivals’ in a quest for personal communion, for collective identity – and for survival itself.”³⁵ The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse had a tremendous impact. It quickly gained prominence precisely because it responded to a deep psychological need for identity, in a symbolic, simple, and universally accessible way, creating a sense of stability and consolation in a present marked by accelerated change and globalization.

2. Virality as a Cultural Process

In today’s world of globalization and rapid technological acceleration, the relationship between people, tradition, and memory is undergoing a profound transformation. The dynamics discussed earlier (the search for identity, nostalgia as a psychological engine, and the reconfiguration of tradition) now find new expression in the digital sphere, where technology mediates and amplifies cultural experience. Cultural elements are no longer transmitted exclusively through rituals or local communities but circulate within a globalized digital space, where images, emotions, and symbols spread rapidly and become recharged with new meanings. In this new reality, the Romanian blouse serves as a compelling example of how local traditions can be re-signified and transformed into contemporary markers of identity. Originating in the rural world and tied to the universe of collective practices, the Romanian traditional blouse has been integrated into the global cultural circuit, gradually becoming both a symbol of authenticity and a visual emblem of Romanian

³³ Ibid., 15.

³⁴ *Adevărul*, “Ziua Universală a lei, celebrată de Sânziene. Bluza tradițională românească, propusă ca brand de țară” [*The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, Celebrated on Sânziene. The Traditional Romanian Blouse Proposed as a National Brand*], June 23, 2013. Accessed September 13, 2025. <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/constant/foto-ziua-universala-a-lei-celebata-de-sanziene-1448841.html>.

³⁵ Tuleja, “Introduction. Making Ourselves Up,” 15.

identity. With the rise of digital networks, this cultural artifact has undergone a process of symbolic reactivation: from an object that once served everyday or ritual functions, it has become a circulating sign adapted to the visual language of online platforms. Within the logic of the attention economy, *ia* becomes an aesthetic, emotional, and communal reference, traversing geographical and cultural boundaries. Through this process of digital re-signification, we are witnessing a new stage in the life of tradition, one in which local values are reinterpreted within the global register of visibility and virality.

a. Digital Culture and Virality

We now live increasingly under the sign of the digital, a space where technology no longer mediates communication but actively reshapes how people create, share, and interpret meanings. What once circulated through ritual, repetition, and communal belonging in traditional settings is today rearticulated through the logic of online platforms, which operate as new environments of memory and performative spaces of identity. The participatory and collaborative nature of the internet encourages the rewriting of traditions, symbols, and cultural forms in digital format, making them accessible to a global audience while subjecting them to the logic of visibility and virality, processes that define contemporary culture and the economy of attention³⁶. A constant tension between the need for continuity and the dislocating force of globalization shapes recent cultural transformations. In this sense, digital culture extends the processes by which tradition is re-signified: it provides the framework within which heritage elements can be recirculated, reinterpreted, and adapted to the present. To understand how a local symbol, the Romanian blouse, becomes a global reference point, we will examine one of the central mechanisms of digital culture: virality.

The concept of “viral” originates in media studies and refers to the way certain messages spread in the digital environment through rapid multiplication and imitation, like the diffusion of a biological virus. Scholarly literature shows that virality cannot be reduced to mere popularity or to the simple number of shares. Anastasia Denisova proposes understanding the viral as a complex cultural phenomenon in which emotions, visual appeal, and users’ willingness to redistribute play a more significant role than algorithmic mechanisms themselves.³⁷ In the same direction, Limor Shifman³⁸ defines virality as a cultural unit, an image, text, or video capable of being replicated and

³⁶ Daniel Miller and Heather A. Horst, “The Digital and the Human: A Prospectus for Digital Anthropology,” in *Digital Anthropology*, ed. Daniel Miller and Heather A. Horst (Berg, 2012), 3–35.

³⁷ “Viral and virality might be among them. What initially was coined – in sociology and media studies – as an allegory of rapid distribution of information and ideas, does strike the researcher today as a limited definition. Viruses affect the living cells of the body, they replicate and mutate, affecting the immunity of the carrier.” Anastasia Denisova, “How to Define ‘Viral’ for Media Studies?” *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 15, no. 1 (2020): 1–4.

³⁸ Limor Shifman conceptualizes virality as a cultural and social phenomenon grounded in user participation and collective meaning-making.

reinterpreted by a large number of users, with each act of circulation adding new layers of meaning, a conceptualization later discussed and synthesized by Kevin Lewis.³⁹ A detailed analysis of the phenomenon, conducted by José-Borja Arjona-Martín, Alfonso Méndiz-Noguero, and Juan-Salvador Victoria-Mas in 2020, shows that virality can be regarded as a paradigm of digital communication, a contemporary form of the traditional word-of-mouth practice. According to their study, the main defining features of viral content are message simplicity, ease of replication, trust in the source, audience emotional engagement, and speed of diffusion. In this sense, virality should be understood not merely as a communication technique but as a cultural mechanism through which content acquires visibility, legitimacy, and meaning.⁴⁰ Although at first glance, virality may appear to be a purely technological phenomenon, numerous scholars describe it as a multidimensional cultural process. On the one hand, it operates through a logic of diffusion, grounded in the content's capacity to circulate rapidly and reach a large audience.⁴¹ On the other hand, virality also operates through the logic of participation, which defines the very essence of contemporary digital culture. As Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green argue in *Spreadable Media*, the circulation of content should not be viewed as an "infectious," mechanical process in which messages propagate automatically, but rather as a form of cultural interaction that depends on people's choices and active involvement. The authors thus challenge the biological metaphor of the "viral" and propose instead the concept of *spreadable media*, emphasizing that meanings circulate only insofar as audiences choose to participate actively in the communicative process.⁴² Another fundamental aspect is the literature's notion of the *logic of affect*. Studies by Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman⁴³ show that intense emotions, whether positive, such as admiration and joy, or negative, such as anger and anxiety, significantly increase the likelihood that a piece of content will be shared.⁴⁴ As Denisova emphasizes, virality is a form of cultural communication that combines emotion, aesthetics, and belonging within a circuit of collective recognition. Within this structure, virality can be seen as a contemporary expression of the human need for community and meaning. Whereas in earlier centuries traditions and rituals provided cohesion and identity, today the circulation of symbols in the digital space fulfils a similar function: it forges connections, evokes emotion, and reactivates cultural memory. In this sense, the viralization of the Romanian

³⁹ Kevin Lewis, "A Review of Memes in Digital Culture," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 10, no. 4 (2016), accessed September 20, 2025, <https://dhq-static.digitalhumanities.org/pdf/000243.pdf>.

⁴⁰ José-Borja Arjona-Martín, Alfonso Méndiz-Noguero, and Juan-Salvador Victoria-Mas, "Virality as a Paradigm of Digital Communication: Review of the Concept and Update of the Theoretical Framework," *Profesional de la Información* 29, no. 6 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.nov.07>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York University Press, 2013).

⁴³ Jonah Berger and Katherine L. Milkman are researchers in the fields of consumer behavior and economic psychology at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Their work focuses on the psychological factors that drive information diffusion and online sharing behaviors.

⁴⁴ Jonah Berger and Katherine L. Milkman, "What Makes Online Content Viral?" *Journal of Marketing Research* (published online before print, 2011), 2.

blouse follows a line of continuity with the processes described above, the re-signification of tradition, restorative nostalgia, and the creative use of the past, yet adapted to the logic of visibility and participation that defines digital culture.

b. The Digital Context of 2013: Conditions for the Emergence of a Viral Cultural Phenomenon

To understand the success of the “La blouse roumaine” initiative launched in 2013, which triggered the institutionalization process of the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, one must consider a broader cultural and technological context. Transformations in the Romanian digital sphere after 1990 fundamentally changed the way traditions, symbols, and forms of identity circulate and acquire new meanings. In the first decade after the fall of communism, access to the internet and to the products of Western culture was perceived as a form of emancipation, marking the beginning of a new stage of modernization. Later, during the 2000s, the spread of high-speed connections and personal devices turned the online environment into a natural space of everyday communication. Within it, a new generation emerged, one for whom the digital world became the natural framework for socialization, emotional expression, and the articulation of identity. This evolution paved the way for a cultural paradigm shift. Around 2010, with the appearance and growing popularity of social networks, new forms of collective participation began to replace traditional community structures. Bloggers, vloggers, and content creators became active agents of a participatory culture in which meanings are co-constructed through sharing, emotion, and visibility.⁴⁵ The year 2013 marked an unprecedented moment: Facebook dominated the social media landscape, concentrating most online interactions. Globally, the platform counted 1.23 billion monthly active users,⁴⁶ while in Romania, there were approximately 7 million active accounts.⁴⁷ Unlike today’s algorithms, which prioritize paid content, in 2013, organic dissemination was already in decline but still had a significant role. Consequently, a post with strong emotional resonance could quickly reach a wide audience.⁴⁸ Moreover, the form that virality took at that time was much closer to the logic of *digital word-of-mouth*, a notion that Henry Jenkins conceptualizes through *spreadable media*.⁴⁹ users were active participants rather than passive receivers, and the success of a message depended on their willingness to share it and to infuse it with new layers of

⁴⁵ Radu Meza, “Digital Culture after 1990,” in *The Social History of Romania*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Constantin Iordachi (Polirom, 2016), 868-869.

⁴⁶ Facebook. “Facebook Reports Fourth Quarter and Full Year 2013 Results.” News release, January 29, 2014. Facebook, Inc. <https://investor.fb.com/investor-news/press-release-details/2014/Facebook-Reports-Fourth-Quarter-and-Full-Year-2013-Results/default.aspx>.

⁴⁷ “Number of Romanian Facebook Users Up by a Quarter in 2013.” *Romania-Insider*, December 10, 2013. Accessed September 12, 2025. <https://www.romania-insider.com/number-of-romanian-facebook-users-up-by-a-quarter-in-2013>.

⁴⁸ Josh Constine, “Why Is Facebook Page Reach Decreasing? More Competition and Limited Attention.” *TechCrunch*, April 3, 2014. Accessed September 12, 2025. <https://techcrunch.com/2014/04/03/the-filtered-feed-problem/>.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, Ford, and Green, *Spreadable Media*, passim.

meaning. A combination of cultural and emotional factors can therefore explain the viral success of the Romanian blouse. After two decades of social transformation and globalization, a significant segment of Romanian society experienced the need for an identity reaffirmation and a symbolic return to its roots. *Ia*, with its affective, visual, and archetypal resonance, became a catalyst for this collective yearning for continuity and belonging. At the same time, the anonymous post from January 2013 on the “La blouse roumaine” Facebook page provided the framework for a shared reactivation of cultural memory. In this context, marked by globalization and interconnectivity, the viralization of the Romanian blouse represented a form of symbolic rebalancing. It was not only an expression of restorative nostalgia but also evidence that, within digital culture, traditions can be revitalised through images, emotions, and participation. Essentially, 2013 was a year of rare alignment between technology, emotion, and cultural memory. It was a moment of technological maturity intertwined with a search for identity, and social networks offered the perfect space for a new kind of symbolic communion. In this sense, the viral spread of the symbol of the Romanian blouse was not a coincidence but the natural outcome of a collective desire to reconnect with one’s roots through the instruments of the modern world. It was the moment when tradition and the digital began to speak the same language.

c. The Romanian blouse: A Viral Symbol

Within the logic of the transformations discussed above, the Romanian blouse is a perfect example of how a local symbolic object can become a global emblem through mechanisms of virality. The *blouse* embodies all the dimensions previously analysed: it is the expression of a restorative collective memory, a form of reclaiming tradition within a globalized context, and at the same time a cultural product shaped by the dynamics of visibility characteristic of the digital age. The moment of 2013, when the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse was launched, marks a unique encounter between tradition and technology, between the real and the virtual community, confirming the idea that contemporary identity is increasingly constructed through image and online participation. Speaking about the Romanian blouse, Andreea Tănăsescu, the founder of the “La blouse roumaine” community, stated in an interview: “*Ia* is part of our soul; it is a cultural essence, a cultural matrix. [...] This word, *Ia*, has absorbed within it the very essence of the blouse – the artistic creation of women.”⁵⁰ This definition highlights that the viralization of the Romanian blouse should not be understood merely as a technological effect, but also as an expression of symbolic and emotional attachment to tradition.

At the same time, the phenomenon generated around the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse represents a form of *digital media event*. In 1992, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, referring to television, defined *media events* as moments of collective recognition that bring communities

⁵⁰ Euronews România. “HYPE. Ia românească, o sursă de inspirație pentru designeri celebri din întreaga lume” (*HYPE: The Romanian Blouse, a Source of Inspiration for Famous Designers Worldwide*). YouTube video, accessed September 12, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQhgb-xnwwQ>

together around a shared symbol.⁵¹ In this case, although it was not mediated by television but by Facebook, the event simultaneously brought together thousands of participants from Romania and the diaspora in a shared experience. Posts featuring photos of people wearing the Romanian blouse, messages of support, and extensive international media coverage created the atmosphere of a cultural ceremony, transforming a heritage object into a global symbol of identity. In the digital environment, the celebration of the *ia* became a form of “cultural event” capable of activating deep emotions and generating a strong sense of community united around a single element that embodies Romanian identity. One might say that, for Romanians living in the country, *ia* represented the reaffirmation of a revalorized tradition. At the same time, for the diaspora, it functioned as an identity marker, a symbolic way to reconnect with their origins.

The emotional dimension plays a central role in the dynamics of virality. Research on digital communication consistently shows that the intensity of emotions directly shapes the likelihood of sharing, a logic confirmed by the 2013 campaign dedicated to the Romanian blouse. Feelings of pride, nostalgia, and cultural belonging acted as emotional accelerators, propelling the rapid spread of images and messages across online networks. In *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*, Jonah Berger demonstrates that virality is not driven by information alone, but by the affective resonance it creates⁵². Viral circulation should therefore not be understood as a purely mechanical or algorithmic phenomenon; rather, it is deeply rooted in the capacity of content to evoke emotion. Emotion operates as a catalyst, turning passive reception into active participation: people do not merely share data; they share the emotion it awakens in them. This mechanism was clearly visible during the first Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse. Participants did not limit themselves to viewing or liking content; they reinterpreted and personalized it, transforming it into an expression of self and belonging. An online interactive map invited Facebook users to mark their location, producing check-ins from across the globe (from New Zealand and Hawaii to Panama, Indonesia, and North Korea)⁵³ while, on June 24, 2013, photos of people (mostly women) wearing the traditional blouse flooded the platform, turning the event into a collective visual celebration. Each post, each comment, and each message became a declaration of cultural belonging. Emotion-fuelled circulation, while identity provided the content with depth and legitimacy. In this sense, the viralization of the *ie* cannot be separated from the cultural and affective context that produced it. The traditional object went viral precisely because it simultaneously touched the community’s emotional and symbolic registers. This overlap explains

⁵¹ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Harvard University Press, 1992), 1.

⁵² Jonah Berger, *Contagious: Why Things Catch On* (Simon & Schuster, 2013), *passim*.

⁵³ Facebook “Photo Album (set = a.378996425552031),” accessed September 18, 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.378996425552031&type=3>; and Smark.ro. “4 Branduri care susțin tradiționalul românesc în viața femeii moderne” (*Four Brands that Support Romanian Traditions in the Life of the Modern Woman*), accessed September 18, 2025. <https://www.smark.ro/articol/26311/4-branduri-care-sustin-traditionalul-romanesc-in-viata-femeii-moderne>.

both the intensity of the phenomenon and its lasting resonance as a cultural reference point years after its initial moment of virality.

Another key factor in understanding the viral spread of the *ie* is the Romanian diaspora. Romanian communities abroad acted as amplifiers of the phenomenon, transforming what began as a local cultural initiative into an event with global visibility. Through their participation, the diaspora reconnected symbolically to the homeland while also contributing to the global circulation of Romanian cultural identity. Studies on digital diaspora show that geographically dispersed communities use social media platforms to rebuild networks of identity and to reaffirm their cultural belonging, thus transcending physical distance.⁵⁴ In the case of the phenomenon under analysis, the Romanian diaspora played a dual role. On the one hand, it contributed to amplifying the movement through active participation, posting photographs and messages, and engaging online with others. On the other hand, it endowed the event with legitimacy and global appeal. For Romanians living abroad, wearing the *ie* was more than an aesthetic gesture; it was an emotional reaffirmation of their connection to “home.” These gestures served as symbolic acts of belonging and public declarations of identity, bridging geographical separation through digital communion. The literature shows that diasporic communities use social media to create “*living archives*” of tradition, spaces where cultural heritage is documented, reinterpreted, and passed on.⁵⁵ This is precisely what has been happening since 2013 regarding the Romanian blouse. The collective imagery surrounding the blouse constitutes a transnational digital archive that has given the phenomenon coherence and projected it onto the global stage. In this process, the diaspora has functioned as a cultural ambassador. Thus, its role is not limited to that of participant or emblem of the phenomenon’s expansion and legitimacy. Through Facebook and beyond, diasporic communities have managed to build a bridge between local heritage and the global circulation of images, transforming the Romanian blouse into a globalized symbol of identity. This active involvement illustrates how the diaspora has become a central actor within digital culture, capable of generating visibility and sustaining symbolic continuity across borders.

One aspect that might otherwise be overlooked in the analysis of viralization is the role of traditional mass media. While social media facilitates rapid diffusion and decentralized participation, legacy media lends the phenomenon public legitimacy. As Dayan and Katz⁵⁶ emphasize, *media events* become moments of collective cohesion only when they are recognized and broadcast as a “spectacle” by media institutions. In this case, the initiative launched on Facebook gained even greater visibility once it was picked up and amplified by the press.⁵⁷ This

⁵⁴ Pusti Panchal and Beenu Mago, “Social Media as a Tool for Cultural Preservation among Diaspora Communities,” *International Journal for Global Academic & Scientific Research* 1, no. 4 (2023), 14–20.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, passim.

⁵⁷ In this context, traditional media acted as an amplifier of the phenomenon, transforming the spontaneous digital event into *cultural spectacle*. Through extensive coverage, the Universal Day of the Romanian blouse moved from the sphere of online communities into that of national visibility, acquiring the status of a moment of cultural cohesion and legitimization. For an overview of how the event was represented in the media, see:

transition from participatory digital media to institutionalized mass media further consolidated the phenomenon. Moreover, media coverage provided it with a unifying narrative: *ia* was no longer merely a garment, but “a symbol of Romanian identity.” Thus, the viralization of the Romanian blouse demonstrates that traditions do not survive through isolation, but through adaptation. What began as an online celebration evolved into a transnational cultural reference point, born from the interaction between social networks, traditional media, and collective emotion.

d. From Virality to Digital Ritual

What in 2013 appeared to be a fleeting moment of online virality has, over time, revealed itself as the beginning of a much broader cultural process. The phenomenon of the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse evolved from a spontaneous digital event into a recurring practice, reactivated each year around June 24. The repeated act of wearing it, photographing it, and sharing the image online has transformed the viral into a form of digital ritual, in which emotional participation intertwines with the reaffirmation of identity. This transformation illustrates the passage from rapidly circulated content to a form of symbolic cohesion sustained through repetition and collective memory. In this way, what began as a viral moment has matured into a lasting cultural phenomenon.⁵⁸ On the one hand, the phenomenon has spread internationally, confirming Kevin Lewis’s observation that virality is a “cultural unit” capable of replication and reinterpretation across multiple contexts. On the other hand, it has undergone a gradual process of institutionalization, culminating in the official recognition of the Day of Romanian Blouse. This development validates Eric Hobsbawm’s notion of *invented traditions*, which, once consolidated, become authentic forms of cultural expression. Today, the representation of the Romanian blouse has shifted toward visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, where emphasis falls on aesthetics and on the Debordian *society of the spectacle*. If the initial wave of virality was grounded in collective emotion and the need for belonging, the current context is dominated by the logic of

“Ziua Universală a lei, celebrată de Sânziene. Bluza tradițională românească, propusă ca brand de țară” (“The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse Celebrated on Sânziene: The Traditional Romanian Blouse Proposed as a National Brand”). *Adevărul*, June 23, 2013. Accessed September 13, 2025. <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/constanta/foto-ziua-universala-a-iei-celebata-de-sanziene-1448841.html>; “FOTO VIDEO De Ziua Universală a lei românescii jurnalistele din Caraș-Severin s-au îmbrăcat în ie și au cules sânziene” (“PHOTO VIDEO: On the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, Journalists from Caraș-Severin Wore the Blouse and Picked Sânziene”). *Adevărul* (Reșița), June 24, 2013. Accessed September 13, 2025. <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/resita/foto-video-de-ziua-universala-a-iei-romanestii-1449144.html>; “Ziua Universală a lei – expoziție de fotografie inspirată de veșmântul tradițional românesc” (“The Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse – A Photography Exhibition Inspired by the Traditional Garment”). *Forbes România*. Accessed September 13, 2025.

https://www.forbes.ro/ziua-universala-a-iei-expozitie-de-fotografie-inspirata-de-vesmantul-traditional-romanesc_0_8059-10793; “De Sânziene sărbătorim Ziua Internațională a lei” (“On Sânziene We Celebrate the International Day of the Romanian Blouse”). *Revista Bulevard*, June 24, 2013. Accessed September 13, 2025. <https://revistabulevard.ro/2013/06/de-sanziene-sarbatorim-ziua-internationala-a-iei/>.

⁵⁸ Denisova, “How to Define ‘Viral’ for Media Studies?,” 1-4.

visibility. Yet even in this aestheticized form, the *ie* continues to function as a symbol of identity and a vector of cultural memory. Its transformation from a fleeting digital event into an annual ritual demonstrates that, in the age of global connectivity, tradition does not fade; it reinvents itself. In this sense, from virality to ritual, *ia* remains a living expression of how Romanian heritage adapts to the new forms of visibility and communication characteristic of the digital era.

Conclusion

An anonymous Facebook initiative that, in less than a decade, became an institutionalized national celebration reveals that the digital environment is not merely a space of diffusion but also a generator of meaning, capable of transforming memory into social and symbolic practice. The phenomenon of the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse, when analysed, demonstrates how tradition, memory, and identity can be reconfigured in the digital age through a complex process of collective re-signification.

The viral spread of the Romanian blouse should therefore not be seen as a technological accident but as a modern way of ritualizing tradition, where emotion and participation serve as channels for cultural transmission. In this context, social networks help create new *lieux de mémoire* (Nora), where the past is reactivated both visually and emotionally, and a sense of belonging is reinforced through gesture and image. The act of wearing the blouse, photographing it, and sharing it online creates a space of participatory memory in which heritage is reconstructed through visibility and interaction.

From an anthropological perspective, this process confirms the mechanisms described by Hobsbawm, but in an inverted way. What we see is not a “top-down” invented tradition, but a “bottom-up” form of sedimentation created by dispersed communities symbolically united around an identity marker. Tad Tuleja’s concept of *usable pasts* offers a helpful interpretive framework: the past becomes a flexible resource for restoring continuity in a world characterized by mobility and globalization. The Romanian blouse, revalorized in the digital environment, clearly expresses this tension between nostalgia and modernity, between loss and reconnecting.

The intersection of multiple factors can thus explain the phenomenon’s success. Collective emotion catalysed viralization, while the participation of the Romanian diaspora ensured the symbol’s global expansion and legitimacy. In this sense, viralization can be seen as a new type of digital communal ritual that, repeated annually, anchors a renewed sense of belonging within the public imagination.

Ultimately, the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse illustrates how globalization does not erase cultural differences but reactivates them in forms compatible with the economy of visibility. Beyond its festive dimension, the phenomenon marks a shift within tradition itself: from an object of preservation to a symbol of participation. Between nostalgia and virality, between tradition and the network, the Romanian blouse continues to exist as a living symbol of an identity constantly being rewritten, affirming that, in the digital age, the past is not merely inherited but collectively performed and recreated.