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The Expression of National Identity in a Cultural Centre

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Abstract. In times of globalisation and cultural interaction, the preservation of national identity is particularly important. Cultural centres play a key role in fostering national values, building community, and preserving traditions. The success of preserving national identity depends on community involvement and financial support, and innovation, including digital technologies and youth engagement initiatives. The article examines the role of cultural centres in the formation of national identity, the role of digital technologies in disseminating national identity, and the involvement of young people in strengthening national identity through educational and cultural activities.

Keywords. National identity, cultural centre

Introduction

Lithuanian cultural centres play an important role in preserving national identity, strengthening community, and fostering regional cultural life. Through educational activities and storytelling, oral traditions are passed on, maintaining the foundations of local identity. In a context of globalisation and rapid modernisation, cultural centres are becoming spaces where local traditions, native language, and creative forms are kept alive and accessible to the community.

The success of cultural centres depends on community involvement, financial support and cultural education. According to Melo & Franco (2025), a collaborative network of local governments, cultural associations, educational institutions, and other civil society organisations can foster the development of recreation, leisure, and culture in local communities, and these relationships impact the well-being of the community by providing a space for leisure, trust, and security.

According to Zheng et al. (2025), music plays an important role in shaping social practices and cultural identity, and its expression and continuity are closely linked to the places where it is performed. Pattanaik (2025) analyses the political, cultural, and artistic aspects of folk dance across different geopolitical contexts: Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Egypt, and Hawaii, showing how traditional dance forms — an important element of folklore — can be reinterpreted and presented on stage as a symbol of national identity.

Today's challenges encourage cultural centres to adapt to change without losing their national identity. Kaur & Bhandari (2023) emphasise that historic cities embody established

identities and therefore need to be preserved, even in the context of reconstruction. This approach is also relevant for cultural centres seeking to maintain their national heritage and contemporary relevance. The introduction of digital technologies (Nurhayati & Kusuma, 2023) helps to engage young people and foster the expression of a modern identity.

International studies (Abdraimova et al., 2024; Gharaei et al., 2024; Wang, 2024) emphasise the role of cultural centres as spaces that not only preserve national values but also shape contemporary identities. They contribute to cultural literacy, integration of minorities, preservation of storytelling traditions, and the application of technological innovations in identity construction (Lasambouw et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2024).

This article examines the role of cultural centres in the formation of national identity, the dissemination of national identity through digital technologies, and the involvement of young people in strengthening national identity through educational and cultural activities.

Literature review

1.1 The Role of Cultural Centres in the Formation of National Identity

Cultural centres are important institutions that help to foster and promote national identity. They organise cultural programmes that include both ancient and contemporary elements of national identity, thus creating a space where national identity can live and develop (Akhaldze, 2023). These centres blend traditional and modern forms of expression, fostering a dynamic environment that enables communities to connect with their roots while embracing contemporary societal changes.

In Lithuania, cultural centres are an integral part of local identity. Gudonytė (2018) emphasises that they become part of the community's cultural identity because they strengthen the sense of belonging to the nation through traditional culture. In this way, cultural centres not only preserve traditions but also act as "laboratories" of national identity, where old and modern expressions intertwine in a lively cultural dialogue. Hikmah & Suharn (2022) note that cultural centres contribute to the dissemination of national identity through events and educational programmes that foster community engagement, preserve cultural heritage, and foster a sense of belonging.

Miliūnienė (2020) highlights the educational role of these institutions, stating that cultural centres transmit national values through projects, songs, dances, and crafts, thereby fostering an emotional connection to national identity, especially among young people. Zheng et al. (2025) found that including local music in urban public spaces not only supports heritage practices but also strengthens residents' sense of place and sparks visitors' emotional engagement, highlighting the performance space as a key arena where cultural memory, identity, and feelings are actively shaped and shared. In this way, traditional elements are preserved and adapted to modern society's needs, reinforcing the continuity of cultural heritage.

Cultural centres often organise events dedicated to folklore, traditional music, and dance. Such events help to preserve cultural practices and pass them on to future generations. Čepaitienė (2014, p. 117) emphasises that "the Lithuanian narrative of nationhood is based not so much on the actual past as on symbolic memory, in which folk tales, songs and the heroic archetype occupy an important place". Cultural centres thus become living repositories of symbolic memory, where folk art and national symbols shape a shared collective identity.

In addition to upholding traditions, the architectural and visual identity of cultural centres is essential. Ouma et al. (2024) note that the architecture and spatial design of cultural centres should incorporate local cultural symbols and artefacts, as these strengthen the community's connection to its cultural identity. Such solutions create not only a physical but

also a spiritual space in which national identity can be experienced, expressed, and passed on to others.

In summary, cultural centres are important institutions that ensure the vitality and continuity of national identity. By organising folklore festivals, ethnocultural events, and national holiday celebrations, they actively foster national identity and strengthen civic awareness and community spirit. By combining heritage with contemporary forms of expression, cultural centres become dynamic spaces where collective memory takes shape, a sense of national belonging is nurtured, and a living link between the past and the present is sustained.

1.2 Digital Technologies in the Dissemination of National Identity

In the digital age, cultural centres are actively using technology to promote national identity and attract diverse audiences. Digital storytelling, social media campaigns, and virtual platforms help cultural narratives reach a wider public, especially the younger generation (Mjahad, 2025). Such formats not only modernise the presentation of culture but also allow audiences to take part in creating and reflecting on cultural content.

Interactive technologies, such as virtual or augmented reality, create immersive environments where visitors can learn more about national history and experience cultural heritage. Akhaladze (2023) emphasises that cultural centres can present traditional heritage in contemporary forms through new media. In Lithuania, this synthesis is supported by Kuiziniene (2020), who argues that digital exhibitions and broadcast events have become an important channel for introducing national heritage to the younger generation, while Godiene (2021) notes that QR code-based exhibitions and interactive games offer engaging, appealing ways to learn about national identity.

The link between tradition and modernity in cultural centres becomes not only a communication platform, but also a creative one. Mandiello et al. (2025), analysing three European countries, found that national culture strongly influences innovation maturity, shaping strategies, behaviours, and cooperation among ecosystem actors, and affecting innovation capabilities. As we know, the primary enthusiasts of innovation are young people; by aligning with innovation, we can therefore hope to increase their involvement in strengthening national identities. Vetrova & Afanas'eva (2024) note that in urban cultural spaces, national identity is strengthened by preserving customs and embracing contemporary cultural expressions. Maţcan-Lisenco (2024) notes a similar trend, arguing that contemporary performance, drawing on elements of folklore, establishes a link between the past and the present. Balevičiūtė (2019) emphasises that such forms of theatre enable the revival of folklore in a contemporary context. Visual art projects that reinterpret ethnographic symbols are becoming a relevant means of communication of national identity.

In the digital age, cultural centres act as important spaces for innovation and creativity, combining tradition with technology. Using digital platforms, interactive exhibitions, and new media tools, they not only preserve national heritage but also present it in an attractive, accessible form for a modern audience. This fusion of tradition and modernity promotes youth engagement, strengthens national identity, and ensures the continuity of cultural heritage in a dynamic society.

1.3 Engaging Young People in the Reinforcement of National Identity Through Education and Cultural Activities

Involving young people in cultural activities is one of the most critical factors in maintaining national identity. Education and culture, in this respect, act as two closely linked spheres, helping the young generation not only to learn about their national heritage but also to bring it up to date in a contemporary context. By organising educational programmes, seminars, workshops and projects, cultural centres provide a space for young people to explore national culture and develop a sense of belonging to a community.

Pattanaik (2025) analyses the creative choices made by different choreographers and artistic directors in different dance genres and finds that large, state-funded companies are changing to attract younger audiences. The scholar reflects on the different meanings of “folk”: in folk dance, in folklore, and in folk wisdom.

Courses on national identity help young people better understand the country’s history and their role in the national narrative, thereby strengthening their emotional connection to the nation. Education based on inclusion and participation creates an active rather than a passive relationship with cultural heritage. Creative educational approaches based on technology and interactivity further enhance this process (Rahmatiani, 2022).

Interactive forms of education, especially digital ones, make it easier for young people to assimilate cultural information while also increasing pride in their identity. This enables national identity to be conveyed in an engaging and contemporary way — through visualisation, multimedia, or playful elements. In Lithuania, Janonienė (2019) highlights this trend, noting that educational activities grounded in authentic local stories help the younger generation gain a deeper understanding of the essence of national culture and become involved in its continuity.

Bučytė-Vilkė (2021) adds that virtual exhibitions, interactive games, and other digital resources enable young people to participate even in regions where traditional cultural activities are limited. Such initiatives not only broaden access to culture but also create new opportunities to experience national heritage informally — through participation, creation, and personal interpretation. This approach allows young people not only to learn about but also to express their national identity in a relevant way, combining the traditions of the past with the cultural expression of the present.

At the same time, involving young people in community activities, cultural events, or debates helps to create a sense of belonging and pride. According to Melo & Franco (2025), an effective collaborative network fosters the development of innovative initiatives while strengthening community ties, thereby reinforcing a sense of identity, belonging, and social cohesion. Jucevičius (2016) emphasises that shared experiences, accompanied by symbolic signs of the nation — such as the flag, anthem, traditional songs, or festivals — strengthen the emotional bond with the nation and its history. In this way, cultural centres become places where young people not only learn about their roots but also have the opportunity to update and communicate them through contemporary cultural forms.

In conclusion, the interaction between education and culture in cultural centres provides a solid basis for the formation of national consciousness among young people. Innovative educational methods, activities based on authentic stories, and creative initiatives encourage young people not only to learn about their national heritage but also to update it in a contemporary context. Involving the younger generation in educational and community activities fosters a sense of belonging, pride and responsibility for the continuity of culture. The participation of young people in cultural centres serves as a guarantee not only of the preservation of national heritage but also of the creation of a modern identity.

Research method

The research on the expression of national identity in a cultural centre is based on the analysis of scientific sources and qualitative and quantitative research conducted in a cultural centre in one district of Lithuania (hereinafter — cultural centre) in April-May 2025. The study aimed to examine community members' attitudes towards cultural initiatives, including youth involvement, and the cultural centre's management's views on the expression of national identity.

To obtain in-depth information on the administration's attitudes, a qualitative study was conducted using structured expert interviews. This method allows for targeted and consistent collection of information, involves the use of pre-designed questions, the recording of responses, and anonymous coding, ensuring consistency and reliability of the survey (Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016). Three experts, all employees of the cultural centre, participated in the study: an events director, a cultural activities manager, and a coordinator. The experts were selected on the following criteria: a university degree, at least 10 years' work experience in the field of culture, and a job title directly related to cultural activities.

The interview questionnaire consisted of eight questions focused on the aspects of expressing, preserving, and strengthening national identity in the cultural centre's activities. The basic ethical principles of confidentiality, voluntary participation, respect for privacy, and participant safety were followed (Žydžiūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017). The identity of the respondents is encrypted, and the data is kept anonymous.

A questionnaire survey was conducted to complement the expert interviews and explore community attitudes. It allowed summarising visitors' opinions on the impact of the cultural centre's activities on strengthening national identity, including the involvement of young people in cultural initiatives. The questionnaire consisted of questions on the frequency of participation in the cultural centre's events, the assessment of forms of expression of national identity, and the attitude towards youth involvement. The survey was conducted in April 2025. A total of 100 questionnaires were completed.

The data were analysed using descriptive methods, highlighting frequencies, recurring themes, and trends. The responses to the expert interviews were coded into main themes and subcategories, enabling a systematic comparison of the different experts' perspectives. The survey results complemented the interview findings by providing a broader perspective on community members' perceptions and values regarding national identity. This ensured triangulation, thereby strengthening the study's validity by combining the perspectives of the administration and the community.

Result and discussion

(i) Visitors' Opinions on the Expression of National Identity in the Cultural Centre

The survey was carried out among 100 visitors to the cultural centre (65% women, 35% men). The respondents' ages are fairly evenly distributed: under 18 (27%), 18–25 (18%), 26–35 (16%), 36–50 (26%), 51–65 (14%), and 66 or older (27%). The most significant proportion of respondents to the survey have a university degree (38%), almost the same proportion have a university degree (33%), a smaller percentage have a primary education (28%), and 1% have a secondary education.

To assess how important national identity is to respondents personally, and the significance they attach to it in their lives, they were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "National identity is an important part of my personal identity". The majority of respondents agree that national identity is an integral part of their personal

identity. 44.6% fully agree with this statement, while 25.7% express strong agreement. An average position was chosen by 27.7% of participants, while only a very small number of respondents (2%) expressed disagreement. No one chose the “completely disagree” option. This shows that national identity is seen as a significant factor in shaping personal identity for the majority of respondents. This trend may reflect the importance of cultural identity in society and the strong connection to national symbols and values. This can be an important aspect of cultural events and educational initiatives to further strengthen national identity.

Cultural events are seen as a vital part of community life, strengthening national identity and promoting cultural heritage. The survey asked respondents to rate the statement “Cultural events strengthen the national identity of the community” (Figure 1).

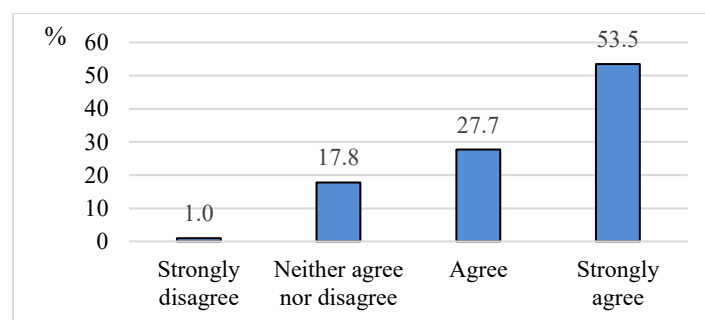


Figure 1. Evaluation of the statement “Cultural events strengthen the national identity of the community”

The survey results show that cultural events play a significant role in strengthening national identity within communities. Up to 53.5% of respondents strongly agree that cultural events strengthen the community’s national identity, while another 27.7% strongly agree and only 1% disagree. The data show that cultural events are important to visitors’ national identity.

Cultural activities are regarded as an important factor in shaping and strengthening national identity. Participating in cultural events, upholding traditions, and engaging with the community help community members better understand their national identity. The aim was to determine how much of respondents’ knowledge of national identity is acquired through participation in cultural activities. The majority of respondents — 53.9% — say that 90-100% of their knowledge about national identity is acquired through cultural activities. Up to 41.2% of respondents indicate that they receive 50-80% of their knowledge about national identity through cultural activities. Only a small proportion — 3.9% — of respondents report receiving between 10% and 40% of their knowledge about national identity through cultural activities. To further strengthen the national identity, more community participation in cultural events and educational programmes should be encouraged.

The cultural centre is regarded as an important hub for cultural, artistic, and educational activities. The survey asked how actively community members are involved in the cultural centre’s activities (Figure 2).

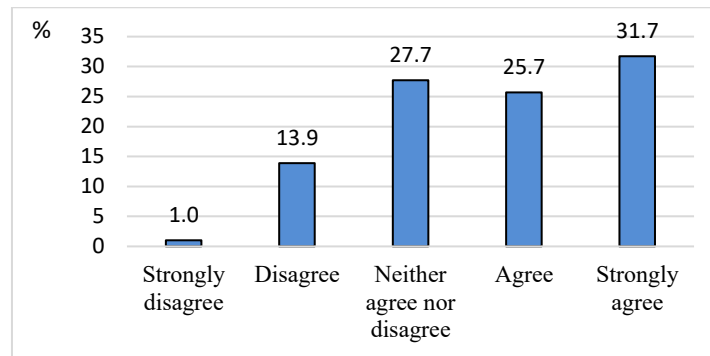
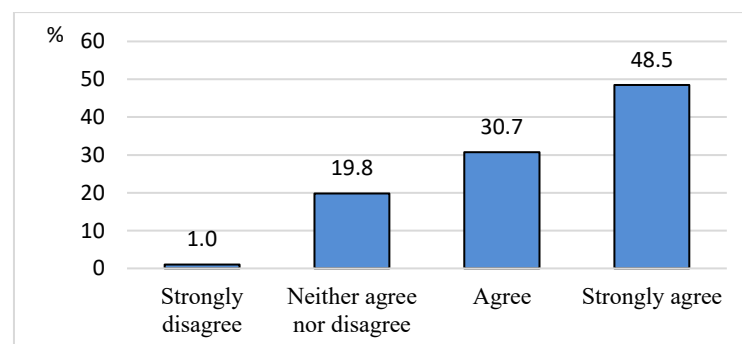


Figure 2. Active participation of cultural centre visitors in cultural activities

According to the survey results, respondents have different attitudes towards active involvement in cultural centre activities. Many of them report moderate participation in the cultural centre's events. The largest proportion of respondents (31.7%) selected the highest level of participation, while 25.7% indicated that they are fairly active. A significant percentage (27.7%) of respondents report a moderate level of involvement, while 13.9% report a low level of involvement. The results indicate that the cultural centre enjoys relatively strong community support; however, it is important to increase visitor engagement and involve less active community members.

The cultural centre organises cultural events that draw a variety of target audiences. The aim was to determine how often community members participate in the cultural centre's activities throughout the year by analysing attendance rates and trends. 11.8% of respondents reported attending events at the cultural centre more than 31 times a year, while 15.7% reported attending 21–30 times. The majority of respondents (46.1%) have attended events 11-20 times. A quarter of respondents (25.5%) attended events at the cultural centre between 1 and 10 times a year.

The participants were interested in how modern technologies can contribute to the development of national identity. Figure 3 analyses the respondents' attitudes towards social networks as a suitable tool for strengthening national identity. Based on respondents' answers, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of how they perceive the importance of these technologies as tools for preserving and promoting national identity.



3Figure. The importance of social networking for the promotion of national identity

Many respondents are positive about the importance of social networking in fostering national identity. The majority of respondents – 48.5% strongly agree and 30.7% agree – also acknowledge that social networks are an important tool for maintaining national identity. It can be argued that social networks are an important tool for fostering national identity, but at the

same time, there is room for debate about how these technologies can be used more effectively to preserve cultural identity.

Respondents were asked how important it is for young people to be involved in cultural activities that strengthen national identity by preserving and transmitting traditions, language, and values to future generations (Figure 4).

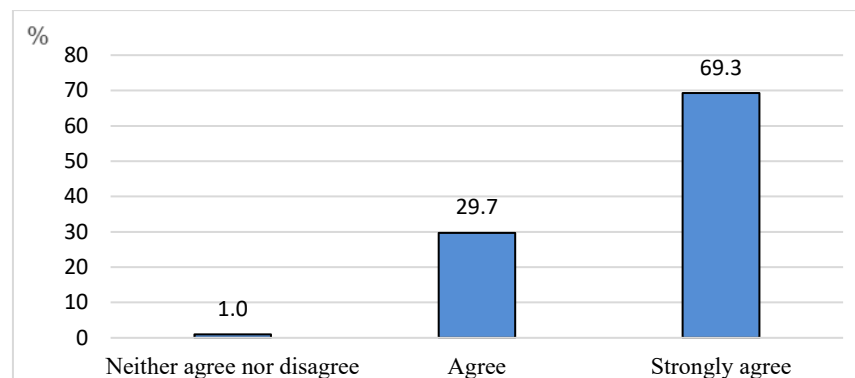


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' views on the importance of young people's involvement in cultural activities that help to strengthen national identity

A large proportion of respondents support the idea that young people need to be more involved in maintaining their cultural identity. Promoting cultural identity through youth engagement is a timely issue that deserves further exploration. It is important to organise educational programmes, community projects, and to use social networks and other communication tools to promote youth participation at the cultural centre.

The cultural centre is regarded as an important institution contributing to the preservation and promotion of national identity. Through cultural activities, events, and educational programmes, the centre promotes community participation in cultural life, reinforces local traditions, and fosters national awareness. We asked visitors how they would evaluate the cultural centre's contribution to promoting national identity. The responses showed a clear trend: the vast majority of respondents (72.3%) rated the cultural centre's activities very highly, giving it a score of 10. This shows strong community support and satisfaction with the centre's activities. 17.8% of respondents gave it a score of 8, which once again confirms the cultural centre's positive impact on fostering national identity. A small proportion of respondents (1–6%) rated the cultural centre's performance lower, which may reflect individual expectations or other factors influencing the overall rating.

Based on the quantitative research, the cultural centre is perceived as a significant factor in strengthening national identity, and its events have a significant impact on the local community.

(ii) Cultural Centre Staff Perspectives on Preserving and Strengthening National Identity

The analysis of interviews with cultural centre staff (experts) identified three main approaches to promoting national identity through cultural activities: (1) strengthening national identity through cultural activities, (2) community involvement in the cultural process, and (3) preserving and transmitting national traditions (Figure 5). These orientations reflect a comprehensive approach to the role of cultural organisations in developing a sustainable

national identity and show that identity development is a coherent managerial process that requires strategic planning and community empowerment.

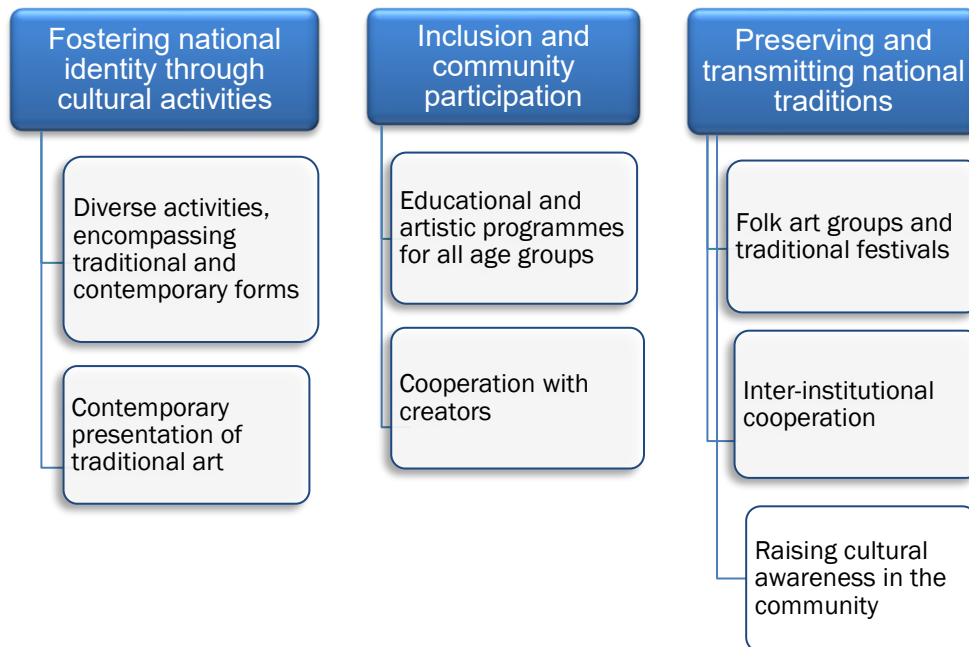


Figure 5. A model for fostering national identity through cultural activities based on expert insights

The first approach involves diverse cultural activities that combine traditional and contemporary forms of expression. The experts stressed that a modern presentation of traditional art maintains the vitality of national culture while updating it for different audiences.

The second approach emphasises community participation and partnerships that help build cultural engagement and social capital.

The third approach highlights the importance of continuity in traditions, ensured through the activities of folk art groups, traditional festivals, and inter-institutional collaboration.

In summary, the experts' insights offer a model for fostering national identity through creativity, community engagement, and collaboration, which can be applied to the strategic management of cultural organisations.

The experts' insights show that fostering national identity is grounded in the principles of creativity, community, and cooperation, which can serve as a managerial model for the strategic activities of cultural organisations.

The analysis of the cultural centre's activities has revealed the main directions contributing to community involvement and the strengthening of national identity (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Cultural centre activities that promote community engagement in fostering national identity

The organisation of traditional events and festivals stands out first, as it preserves national traditions and reinforces the community's cultural connections.

The second approach concerns artistic collectives and creative initiatives that enable participation by different age groups and the expression of national identity through creativity. The third approach includes educational and partnership programmes focusing on youth engagement and cultural awareness.

Finally, supporting community initiatives and networking ensures sustainable cultural cooperation between institutions and local communities. These activities reflect the cultural centre's role as a local cultural management institution in shaping an active and engaged cultural sphere and fostering national identity at the regional level.

During the expert interviews, the employees of the cultural centre identified both traditional and contemporary elements of national identity expression (Figure 7). Traditional forms included calendar and traditional festivals, folk dances, national costumes, folk music, songs, and performances by folk ensembles. These elements, in the opinion of the experts, form the basis for preserving national culture and give the community the opportunity to experience an authentic national tradition.

At the same time, the experts stressed the importance of contemporary forms of expression, including digital content, interactive education, visual solutions, contemporary dance, light installations, and scenography. According to the respondents, these elements help the cultural centre adapt the presentation of national identity to a modern audience, encourage active participation, and create an immersive experience that blends tradition and modernity (Figure 7).

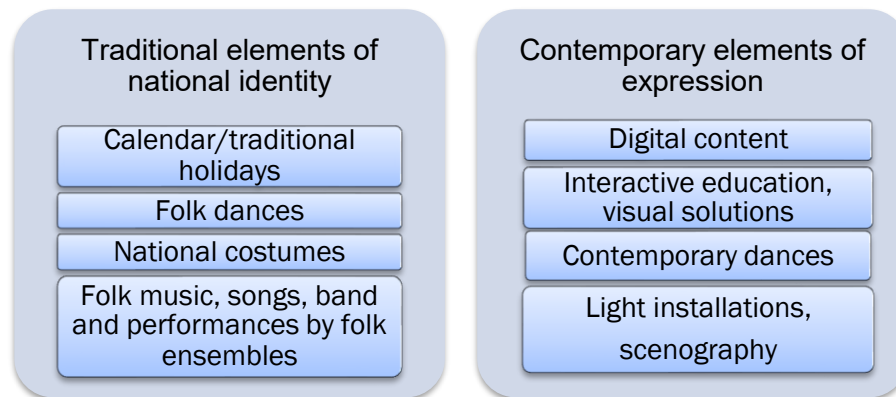


Figure 7: Traditional and contemporary elements of national identity

The experts were asked what innovative measures the cultural centre uses to promote national identity. Informants mentioned interactive education and virtual exhibitions. There is a strong focus on digital and visual tools, including visual communication, photos, videos, QR codes, and social media campaigns. According to the experts, modern art installations and presentations at events, digital installations, and book fairs with contemporary solutions are used.

As a regional cultural institution, the cultural centre conducts various activities that engage different segments of society — youth, seniors, and migrants. The experts were asked how the cultural centre’s activities contribute to strengthening national identity and what impact they have on different social groups. Informants mentioned that young people are attracted to cultural centres by modern event formats, engaging content, education, and creative activities. For seniors, preserving traditions and transmitting knowledge are important, while for migrants, cultural adaptation through local traditions and integration into the new cultural environment are key.

Experts identified several key challenges to fostering national identity (Figure 8). The most significant challenge is the low level of youth engagement, as traditional activities do not always align with the interests and values of modern young people. It also highlights the public’s passivity and indifference towards culture, which reduces community involvement in the cultural centre’s activities.

Another challenge is balancing the needs of different generations, which requires combining traditional and contemporary forms of national expression. Experts also pointed to the lack of creative, innovative staff and financial resources, which limit the scope for new initiatives. Finally, the challenge of balancing authenticity and modernity was emphasised — the need to preserve the essence of national culture while presenting it in a way that appeals to contemporary audiences (Figure 8).

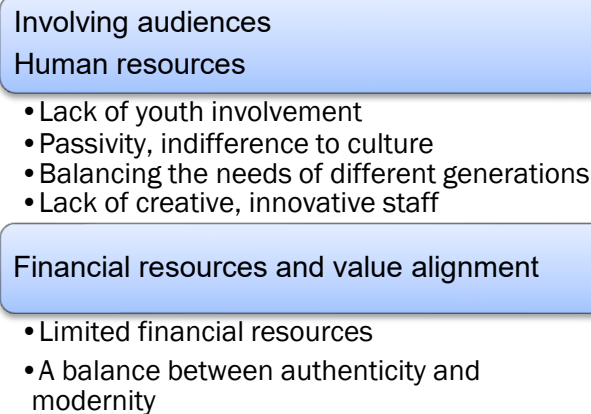


Figure 8: Emerging challenges facing the cultural centre

The expert interviews revealed that the expression of national identity in a cultural centre is closely linked to the strengthening of regional identity and the building of community unity. The experts stressed that cultural events rooted in local traditions and symbols promote pride in one's home country and foster an emotional connection to the homeland. It helps community members appreciate their region's cultural heritage and understand its significance in the national context.

According to experts, through the expression of national identity, values and symbols are actualised and roots and identity are recognised, especially among young people. The cultural centre's activities create a space where traditions are interpreted in contemporary ways, thus preserving the vitality of regional identity.

The experts also highlighted the aspect of strengthening community unity. They argue that cultural centres help create a sense of community and connect the community through cultural activities that include both traditional and modern forms of expression. In this way, national identity acts as a connecting link, strengthening interpersonal bonds, fostering solidarity, and creating a sense of pride in one's homeland.

Conclusions

National identity is one of the most important components of social identity, shaping community and individual cultural consciousness. Cultural centres play a key role in disseminating national culture by providing platforms for celebrating traditions, hosting festive events, offering educational programmes, and supporting community projects.

National identity is seen by many respondents as an important part of personal identity, linked to values and a sense of belonging. The cultural centre is regarded as a significant promoter of national identity, with its events strengthening community self-awareness. Social networks are seen as an effective tool for fostering national identity, especially for engaging young people, and the importance of young people in ensuring cultural continuity is also highlighted.

Cultural centre staff view national identity not only as cultural heritage but also as a value that unites the community. Cultural activities are an important tool for building community and strengthening local identity, promoting community involvement and cultural awareness. National identity supports the continuity of traditions and strengthens the connection to local cultural heritage. The results show that cultural activities are crucial for maintaining regional and national identities in a globalised context.

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