

AI Report

Using AI in Cultural Diplomacy: How the UAE Could Benefit

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Culture



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Al Mughairy's background lies in project management, strategic planning, communication and outreach, and she has 10 years of experience working in key government projects ranging from international media productions and creative special projects to, more recently, diplomatic events.

For centuries, the intersection of diplomacy and culture has played a pivotal role in fostering peace, prosperity, and understanding among nations. This intersection has given birth to the practice of cultural diplomacy, which encompasses the exchange of artistic, intellectual, and cultural expressions, and has served as a powerful tool in building bridges, nurturing dialogue, and promoting mutual respect. By embracing cultural diversity and leveraging the power of diplomacy, nations have cultivated enduring relationships, celebrated shared heritage, and advanced collective goals, contributing to a harmonious global community.

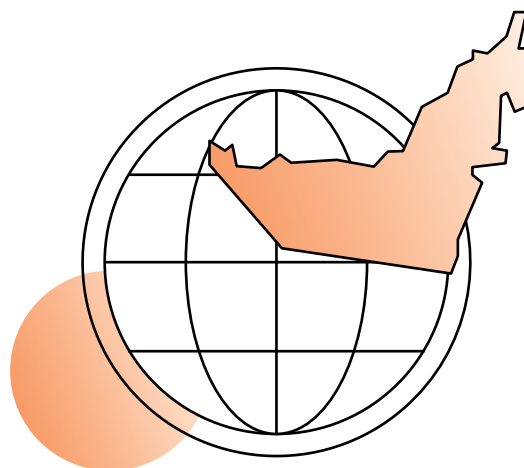
AI has the potential to transform the realms of diplomacy and culture. It stands to revolutionize the way in which diplomatic interactions are conducted and to shape the nature of issues addressed by diplomats, governments, and stakeholders. AI can also play a role in promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

By harnessing the potential of AI, cultural diplomats can benefit from enhanced cross-cultural engagements, improve communication, and gain a deeper understanding of societal trends. This report will investigate how AI has the potential to serve cultural diplomacy by amplifying the speed and accuracy with which we communicate and connect, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and understanding. It will also aim to examine how AI can assist cultural diplomacy in building the UAE's global reputation.

While the integration of AI into cultural diplomacy offers tremendous potential, it also raises ethical considerations. Issues such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and cultural sensitivities must be addressed to ensure the responsible and equitable use of AI technologies. Policy makers, diplomats, and stakeholders need to be aware of the ethical and responsible deployment of AI in diplomatic and cultural contexts. This report will also explore the general perception that AI cannot replace cultural diplomacy practices and focus on the assistance it can provide.

Cultural diplomacy: Definition, objectives, and principles

Cultural diplomacy refers to the use of cultural interactions, initiatives, and exchanges to foster understanding, cooperation, and positive relations between nations or communities. Political scientist Milton C. Cummings characterizes it as "the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understandings" (Cummings, 2003). It encompasses activities such as cultural exchanges, exhibitions, performances, and language programs.



Cultural diplomacy is often positioned as the largest sub-area of public diplomacy. It could be defined as a form of liaison between governments and people abroad, established specifically through artistic and intellectual resources and activities. In practice, governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), cultural institutions, and international organizations actively engage in cultural diplomacy to promote their respective cultures, values, and interests on the global stage. These initiatives aim to enhance diplomatic relations by building trust, facilitating dialogue, and bridging cultural gaps.

Traditionally, cultural diplomacy has functioned in international relations through initiatives such as cultural exchanges, educational and scholarly programs, and language institutes. These are provided by centers and organizations that serve as hubs for promoting a nation's culture, language, and values overseas. Examples include the British Council, the Goethe-Institut, Confucius Institutes, and Alliance Française.

Governments appoint cultural diplomats or attachés to establish connections with local cultural institutions and promote cultural initiatives. Initially, cultural diplomacy primarily focused on state-sponsored cultural exchanges and initiatives. However, it has expanded to incorporate a broader range of participants, including NGOs, artists, and scholars.

According to public diplomacy expert Nancy Snow (2008), the key objectives of cultural diplomacy vary depending on the context and specific objectives of a nation or organization. However, some common goals include promoting mutual understanding, building relationships, enhancing national reputation, and fostering cooperation among nations through cultural interactions.

Moreover, the principles of cultural diplomacy are based on:



Respect, mutual understanding, and cultural diversity



Encouraging global intercultural dialogues



Justice, equality, and fostering interdependence between nationals



Promoting global peace and stability

Cultural diplomacy in the UAE

Most cultural diplomacy activities are considered to be aspects of public diplomacy. This is predominantly approached in two ways: branding and advocacy. Branding, which is more common, taps into international recognition of a country's cultural production—K-pop for South Korea or Hollywood for the US are prime examples—to create an image.

The UAE has been actively engaging in cultural diplomacy in recent years to promote its image as a modern, innovative, and tolerant nation. The government's dedication to cultural diplomacy and the embodiment of founding father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's values have significantly contributed to the country's development. The Cultural Advisor to the President of the UAE, His Excellency Zaki Anwar Nusseibeh, says Sheikh Zayed recognized the importance of building ties based on shared cultural values, stating: "You have to build those ties not only on commercial, financial, and economic interest but on shared cultural values. This is why Sheikh Zayed was keen from the beginning to take the UAE culture with us wherever we went, to open bridges to the cultures of the world, and to allow cultures of the world to come to us" (The National, 2019).

Moreover, Sheikh Zayed's values—founded on tolerance, peace, and stability—have enhanced the UAE's global reputation, increased its soft power, attracted tourism and investment, and fostered social cohesion, while aligning with the nation's sustainable development goals. By continuing to prioritize cultural diplomacy, the UAE is well positioned to drive its development forward, while maintaining its commitment to cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. This was the leadership's vision, according to H.E. Nusseibeh, who asserts that cultural diplomacy is at the heart of any foreign policy. He adds: "Sheikh Zayed's love for humanity was deeply firm and was the foundation of his foreign policy strategies. He truly believed that we, as a human race, are one family, and that we need to work with each other to understand each other, to strive for peace and stability, so that we can bring prosperity not only to our own people, but also to those around us who are in need of help" (The National, 2018).

The UAE recognizes the importance of cultural diplomacy in

establishing connections, facilitating dialogue, and shaping its global perception. It has actively used it as a means to achieve its foreign policy objectives, and to prioritize nation branding and soft power projection in its public diplomacy strategy. The country's efforts in this regard have gained global recognition, with the UAE ranking first in the region and 18th internationally in the Global Soft Power Index in 2020 and having climbed into the top ten since. Strategic use of cultural diplomacy has allowed the UAE to enhance its international reputation, showcase its values and achievements, and cultivate strong relationships with other nations.

Cultural diplomacy is one of the main means of exercising soft power. It helps to build a nation's reputation, shape its narrative, and promote its branding. The UAE is already benefiting from its strong work in cultural diplomacy, but it now has to look at how AI can amplify its efforts and successes.

Integrating AI into cultural diplomacy

The UAE has made significant investments in diverse industries, including renewable energy, space exploration and, notably, artificial intelligence (AI). AI systems use algorithms and data to analyze, interpret, and respond to information in a way that resembles human cognition as defined by Russell, Norvig, Davis, and Sacerdoti (2021) in *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach* (2021).

“ Cultural diplomacy is a complex field that relies on human interactions that, in terms of emotional engagement and understanding, cannot be replaced by AI. ”

Nevertheless, it is worth exploring AI's potential in aiding cultural diplomacy in practice, particularly cross-cultural understanding, and dialogue. Additionally, the UAE's work with AI can contribute to building its global reputation and narrative. The question is, what are the most effective ways it could do this?

Institutional practice

AI-powered chatbots and voice assistants such as Microsoft Translator, Google Translate, and iTranslate provide real-time translation of text, speech, and visual content. They facilitate communication, promoting cross-cultural dialogue and enabling smoother interactions between people who speak different languages.

Future innovations could allow AI algorithms to analyze user preferences and behavior to provide personalized recommendations for cultural content based on factors including their age and location. This could expose individuals to a diverse range of cultural expressions, fostering the understanding and appreciation of different cultures.

AI can aid in cultural exchanges by analyzing data to identify the cultural preferences and interests of different audiences. For example, social media data can be assessed to establish the types of art that are most popular among a particular group and to create content that aligns with their interests. AI can also assist with the translation of cultural content into different languages, which can facilitate cultural exchanges.

It can also be used to develop interactive educational platforms that provide insights into various cultures, traditions, and histories. The integration of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies can create immersive experiences that allow people to learn about different cultures firsthand—for example, through tours of UAE landmarks or museums, or via traditional cultural experiences.

The UAE can pioneer the incorporation of AI into cultural diplomacy. AI data could provide insights into cultural trends and sentiments, which may in turn help in the identification of commonalities, allowing us to bridge cultural gaps and foster dialogue among diverse communities.

Reputation building

Reputation building is an essential aspect of cultural diplomacy as it involves enhancing the image of a country and projecting its success story. The UAE has been actively promoting its reputation as a modern, innovative, and tolerant nation through initiatives such as the UAE Centennial Plan 2071, which aims to transform the country into a knowledge-based economy.

AI can aid in reputation building by analyzing data—social media data, for example—to identify the types of messages that are trending and to instantly curate messages that align with these. AI-powered social media monitoring can use emerging topic detection methods to analyze public sentiment and cultural trends, providing valuable insights for cultural diplomacy efforts.

AI can also assist with monitoring online conversations and sentiment analysis to help identify potential reputational risks and opportunities. Analysis of social media data and online conversations can provide insights into how people perceive the UAE and its culture.

“ AI could be used to identify areas where the UAE’s reputation may be weak, or where misconceptions exist, allowing cultural diplomats to target their efforts more effectively. ”

Storytelling

The UAE has a rich cultural heritage that is deeply rooted in its history and traditions. The country has been actively promoting its cultural heritage through various initiatives, such as Expo

2020 Dubai. This event attracted millions of visitors from around the world and showcased the UAE’s cultural diversity and innovation. Its narrative was built on being a young but visionary country that is home to more than **200 nationalities** who coexist peacefully. In the future, AI-powered chatbots could be used to engage with people online following events such as Expo 2020 to answer their questions about the UAE, amplify its success stories, and provide curated and up-to-date information in a conversational format.

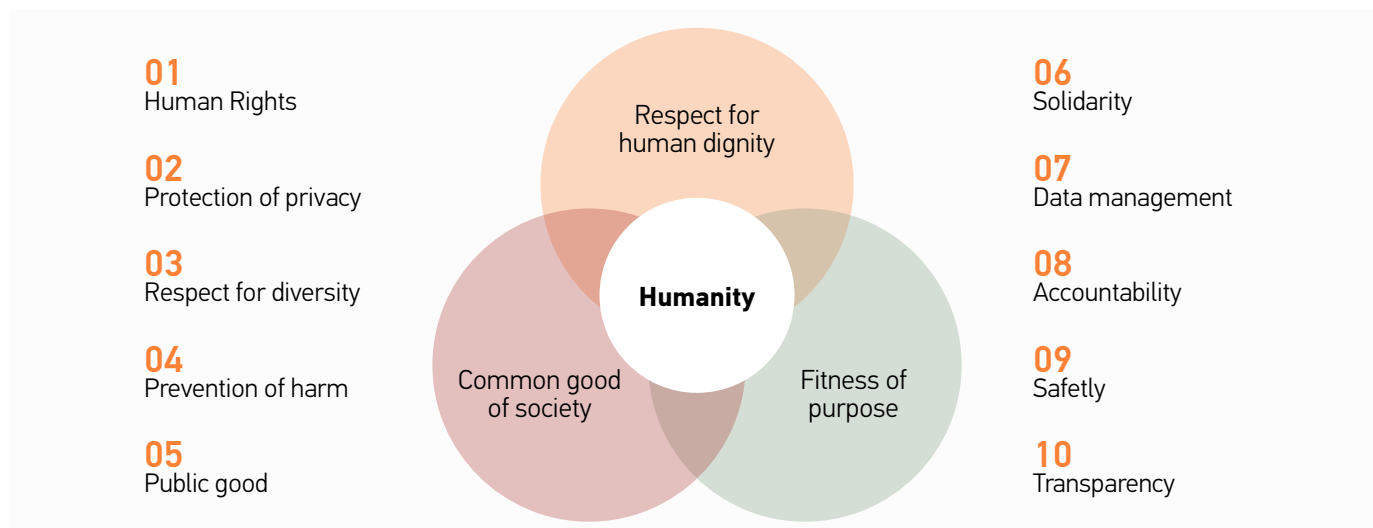
Storytelling is an essential element of cultural diplomacy as it allows countries to communicate their values and aspirations to the world. AI enables personalized storytelling by analyzing audience interests and demographics, meaning it can deliver messaging that aligns with user preferences. In line with this, AI can power social media data analysis, which helps identify topics and create content that resonates with specific audiences.

AI can also monitor and analyze news coverage and other media to identify trends and narratives that may be shaping public perceptions of the UAE. This can be used to inform strategic communications and messaging that help shape a more positive narrative about the country and its culture.

Case study: South Korea

Countries and organizations are incorporating AI into their cultural diplomacy strategies in different ways. South Korea’s “soft power diplomacy” is perhaps most clearly manifested through its pop culture. It is now building out this soft power strategy by promptly putting in place people-centric policies to make Korea a trusted leader in AI.

South Korea’s strategy of developing “trustworthy artificial intelligence for everyone” will be implemented in stages through to 2025, based on the three pillars of technology, system, and ethics. It will also have ten action plans to ensure the ethical and effective use of AI, according to its government (Ministry of Science and ICT, 2021).





South Korea's Cultural Technology initiative focuses on leveraging AI, VR, AR, and other technologies to promote Korean culture globally and enhance cultural exchange. The Korea Creative Content Agency uses AI algorithms to analyze cultural content preferences, promote Korean cultural products, and tailor content recommendations to different audiences.

South Korea has leveraged AI technology to overcome barriers of distance, language, and accessibility, enabling people from different cultures to connect and engage in meaningful ways. It has projected how VR and AR applications powered by AI could provide immersive cultural experiences, allowing individuals to explore diverse cultural expressions remotely. AI-driven recommendation systems can also provide personalized cultural content to people, facilitating cross-cultural dialogue.

Considerations when integrating AI into cultural diplomacy

Integrating AI into cultural diplomacy efforts provides many opportunities, but there are ethical concerns that must be considered to ensure the responsible and equitable deployment of AI in this context. A UNESCO report (2021) that explores the ethical implications of AI highlights the following potential risks and challenges:

 **Bias and representation.** AI systems are susceptible to the biases present in training data, meaning they could perpetuate cultural stereotypes. Care must be taken to ensure diverse and representative data sets are used to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities or exclusions.

 **Privacy and data protection.** AI often relies on user data to personalize experiences and provide recommendations. Ensuring the privacy and security of user information is crucial for preventing the misuse of or unauthorized access to sensitive cultural data.



Human interaction and cultural authenticity. AI technologies may struggle to replicate the emotional connections and human interactions that are integral to cultural diplomacy. They may also face difficulties in accurately capturing the depth and authenticity of cultural expressions, potentially leading to the dilution or misinterpretation of cultural content. Maintaining a balance between technology-driven experiences and genuine human connections is essential.

Addressing these challenges and ethical considerations will require ongoing collaboration between technologists, cultural experts, policymakers, and stakeholders. Frameworks, policies, and guidelines need to be in place to govern the use of AI in cultural diplomacy. It is also imperative to ensure there is regular re-evaluation of strategies and that a careful balance is struck between technology and human interaction. Inclusivity, authenticity, and cultural sensitivity must be prioritized throughout. The UAE's track record in adopting and regulating cutting-edge technologies such as cryptocurrency puts it in a strong position to take the lead on creating ethical approaches to AI. This leadership will in turn help to amplify the country's visions and values.

Conclusion

AI has a major role to play in cultural diplomacy strategies, and can be harnessed to facilitate cultural exchange, promote understanding, and foster diplomatic initiatives. It can also support cultural diplomacy in the UAE by identifying the cultural preferences and interests of foreign nationals to make cultural exchange more accessible.

AI can also contribute to reputation building and the development of the UAE's narrative by identifying and creating the key messages and themes that resonate with different audiences and by monitoring online conversations and sentiment analysis. Japan and South Korea have implemented

successful AI-led initiatives that could be mirrored by the UAE.

This report has examined the potential of some AI applications in the field of cultural diplomacy. More broadly, AI has a range of potential applications and continues to evolve, meaning the ways it can help advance a nation's interests will evolve too. However, to ensure responsible deployment, it is crucial to take ethical considerations and potential biases into account while prioritizing inclusivity and cultural authenticity. Striking a balance between technology and human interaction, and always ensuring wide stakeholder engagement, can maximize the positive impact of AI on cultural diplomacy initiatives. The UAE's expertise in soft power and smart power means it is well-placed to take a leadership role in crafting this new form of enhanced cultural diplomacy.

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