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**Influence of social networks on the process of socio-cultural
adaptation of young migrants in Italy**

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Abstract

This study is based on a research project called “Vie di uscita. Storie di scatti e di vita” which is organized by the department of comparative linguistic cultural studies at the university of Cà Foscari in Venice (Banzato, 2025). Driven by a similar academic purpose, this thesis investigates two important elements that can influence socio - cultural adaptation of immigrants: the role of social networks and the level of intercultural sensitivity.

In the specific case of this study, the target population consists of 22 young students in an educational institution, located in the northeastern part of Italy, more precisely in the Veneto region. To provide an accurate overview of how digital platforms influence young immigrants' integration, the analysis focuses on the relevance of the following social media functions: Interaction, information, participation, production, language learning and the use of translating instruments. Furthermore, the levels of intercultural sensitivity that will be taken into account are the ones related to Bennett's model: negation, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration.

The chosen method of research is the questionnaire, which is one of the quantitative instruments that was employed in the research project just mentioned.

This case study yields two main conclusions. Firstly, research results outline that there is a positive attitude towards intercultural sensitivity, highlighting that the participants have adapted in the new socio-cultural environment. Secondly, there are both positive and negative aspects related to the different social media functions that have been evaluated through the use of the questionnaire. In detail, data gathered suggest that social media functions related to information communication and implicit participation are the most helpful for the participants process of adaptation, while other significant ones associated with production and language learning have low influence in facilitating their integration in the Italian society.

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Introduction

Recent research has investigated the use of social networks by immigrants in the process of adaptation in a different socio-cultural context, underlining their efficacy for example, in enhancing communication and access to information. However, as indicated by Banzato (2025) the research is scarce on adolescent migrants and it predominantly focuses on adults or young adults, mostly refugees, migrant workers or international students.

Consequently, this study can be significant because it provides critical insight into the general influence of the different social media functions related to young immigrants and their adaptation patterns. The questionnaire aims to explore these aspects by addressing two specific questions: 1) Do social networks facilitate the socio-cultural adaptation of young immigrant students within Italian society?. 2) What level of intercultural sensitivity does adolescent migrants exhibit and how does this correlate with their process of adaptation in the host country?.

The case study is organized into 5 chapters. The first chapter examines the general processes of immigration and socio-cultural adaptation, alongside the dimensions of intercultural sensitivity. This section initiates with an overview on the migratory presence in Italy and, more specifically, of the Veneto region, the location in which the research took place. Important socio demographic factors of the part of Italian population constituted by immigrants, will be considered (nationalities, age gender, education and working positions). The analysis then transitions to the core aspects of acculturation, dissecting the conceptual foundations, progressive stages and behavioral strategies. Furthermore, it delineates the multifaceted determinants that influence the adaptation process and concluding exploring the levels of intercultural sensitivity.

The second chapter assesses the crucial role of social networks in the process of adaptation, balancing the positive affordances and the systematic challenges of the different social media functions mentioned in the abstract.

The third chapter details the methodology of the research indicating, firstly, the design and participants. Secondly, the instruments used are highlighted and the consent acknowledgment. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the decision to divide the items of the questionnaire into two parts, each addressing the questions of the case study previously discussed. The first part aims precisely to analyze how the functions provided by social network could be useful for immigrants integrating, while the second part deals with exploring young immigrants in Italy level of openness to the existence of other cultures and their ability to integrate in the country

of arrival. The third chapter concludes with an overview of the administration procedure of the questionnaire and data analysis.

The results of data analysis are shown in the fourth chapter, referring to two statistical variables, which are mean and standard deviation. In the fifth chapter, are included the discussion regarding the results of the questionnaire, conclusions, and study limitations. Finally, the thesis ends with bibliography.

Chapter 1. Migration and sociocultural adaptation

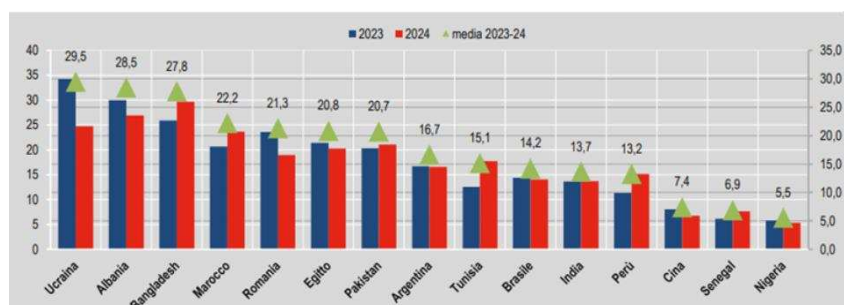
1.1 The migratory presence

According to Istat report “Migrazioni interne e internazionali della popolazione residente report anni 2023-2024” (2025), during 2024, most immigrants in Italy came from Bangladesh, followed by Albania and Ukraine (See Figure. 1). Notably, apart from the first one, the other two countries have experienced a decrease in the influx of people compared to the year 2023, especially Ukraine.

A similar pattern can be noticed considering the following countries, with a medium level of immigrants’ presence: Morocco, Pakistan, Egypt and Romania. More foreigners entered from Morocco and Pakistan, even if there is little difference from the previous year, but the remaining countries, on the other hand, show a slight decrease which is more evident in the case of Romania.

In addition, other nationalities in the chart (Tunisia, Argentina, Perú, Brazil and India), are below the medium presence level. Tunisia registered a significant increase in the last year while Argentina, Brazil and India have had no variations in the last two years. Perú has a higher score than 2023 and, in conclusion, the lowest entries of immigrants in Italy, in 2024, have been from Senegal, China and Nigeria, in which the first is the only one that had a minimum increase.

Figure. 1 Immigrations of foreign citizens for the most relevant countries of origin



Source: Migrazioni interne e internazionali della popolazione residente, Istat, 2025

According to the report “Immigrazione straniera in Veneto report 2024” (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2025), the north appears to be the preferred destination for foreigners, followed by the center and the south (See Table. 1). Lombardia is the region of Italy with the largest number of immigrants in 2024 (1.203.138), Veneto shows particularly significant data, counting 501.161 people and 9.5% of distribution, one of the highest in the entire country. Valle D’aosta, in terms of number of immigrants, has the lowest number of immigrants not only in the north, but also in Italy in general, only reaching the 0.2% of distribution.

In the central part of Italy, the regions with the highest percentage of immigrants are Lazio (12,2%) and Emilia Romagna (10.7%) while, on the contrary, the ones with the lowest are Umbria (1.7%) and Abruzzo (1.6%). As for the south, there is evidence of scarce results in general, especially Sardegna (1%), Basilicata (0,5%) and Molise (0,3%), but there seems to be more foreign presence in Sicilia (3,7%) and Puglia (2,8%).

Table.1 Foreign people for region

Regioni	Pop. Straniera	Distr. %	Incidenza sulla popolazione totale
Lombardia	1.203.138	22,9%	12,0%
Lazio	643.312	12,2%	11,3%
Emilia-Romagna	560.953	10,7%	12,6%
Veneto	501.161	9,5%	10,3%
Piemonte	428.905	8,2%	10,1%
Toscana	424.066	8,1%	11,6%
Campania	263.680	5,0%	4,7%
Sicilia	196.919	3,7%	4,1%
Liguria	155.646	3,0%	10,3%
Puglia	147.269	2,8%	3,8%
Marche	132.011	2,5%	8,9%
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	120.144	2,3%	10,1%
Trentino Alto Adige	102.890	2,0%	9,5%
Calabria	99.907	1,9%	5,4%
Umbria	88.579	1,7%	10,4%
Abruzzo	85.828	1,6%	6,8%
Sardegna	52.041	1,0%	3,3%
Basilicata	25.410	0,5%	4,8%
Molise	13.231	0,3%	4,6%
Valle d'Aosta	8.568	0,2%	7,0%
Italia	5.253.658	100,0%	8,9%

Source: Immigrazione straniera in Veneto report 2024, Fondazione Leone Moressa (2025)

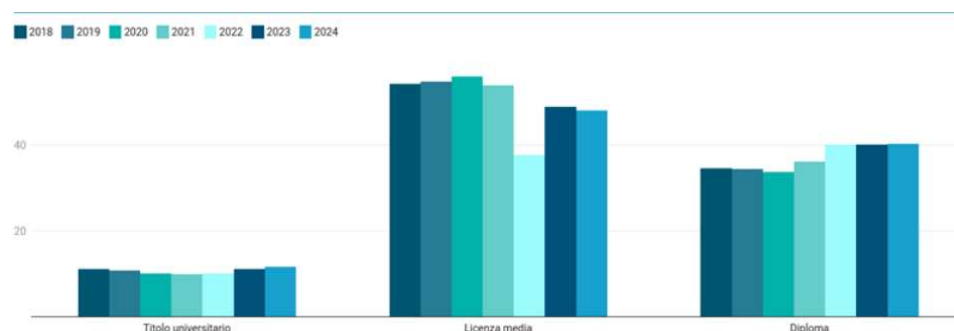
Furthermore, in Veneto, immigrants come mainly from Romania (25.2%) with a great percentage that originates also from Morocco (9%) and China (7.3%), while the countries with the lowest presence in this region seem to be Brazil, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Tunisia, more specifically the second with only 1% of distribution.

About the provincial tendencies, there is more concentration of foreigners in the provinces of Verona (22%), Padova (19,4%) and Treviso (17,8%), with a higher percentage of Romanians. Even taking into account the gender aspect, significant results emerge because it is revealed that in 2024, Veneto appears to have a highest presence of females (50,8%), especially from Ukraine (76,3%), Moldavia (65,6%) and Philippines (55,8%). On the contrary, in Italy, report “Censimento e dinamica della popolazione anno 2024” by Istat (2025) shows that, it is indicated a higher number of male immigrants (2.689.622) than female (2.681.629), mainly from Romania (Males: 460.358) and Morocco (Males: 226.134).

About the age factor, “Censimento permanente della popolazione in Veneto anno 2024”(Istat, 2026) highlights, the age index of 28,9 in the case of Italy and 29,7 in Veneto, underlining the young age of immigrants in both cases.

The report “Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro” (Istat,2025), exposes both promising and worrying results about the educational aspect of Italy in 2024 (See figures. 2,3). The first figure demonstrates that over the years there has been an increase in the number of high school immigrants’ graduates and a decrease in the number of people with just a middle school diploma. Despite this, there is also an issue which is related to university titles and what particularly concerns is the fact that not only are there very few people with this title but also that there hasn’t been much variation in seven years.

Figure 2. Foreign population for educational title

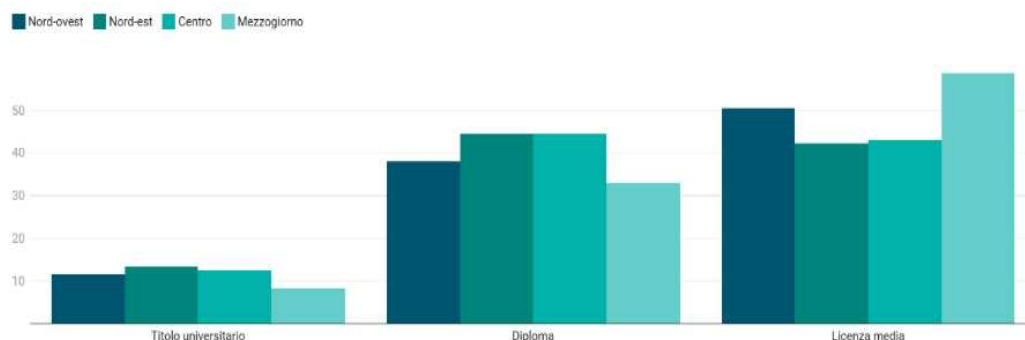


Source: Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro , Istat (2025)

Figure 3 considers the educational level of immigrants in the different parts of Italy, which is necessary to observe eventual differences. It is revealed that, in the northern and the central parts, there are more people with a high school diploma. Even in this case, there is no significant difference in the number of foreigners with a university degree, with still very low results.

Both data related to Italy and the different regions could have negative implications for the process of adaptation of immigrants as, research has established (Ibrahim, 2020), that people with a more advanced educational title should be more able to understand language and the use according to specific discourse context.

Figure 3. Foreign population for educational title and geographical distribution



Source: Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro, Istat (2025)

In the schools of Veneto, data analysis by USR Veneto (2025) shows that CNI immigrant students (with non-Italian citizenship) seem to be more present in Vicenza, Treviso, Padova and Verona followed by Venezia, Belluno and Rovigo.

The most common countries of origin appear to be Romania, Morocco, Albania and China, evident in Treviso which is characterized by the presence of many Romanians (17.3%), Moroccans (10.8%), Albanians (9.4%) and Chinese (8.5%) people.

The distribution is heterogeneous in the sense that there is discrepancy in the number of students with or without the Italian citizenship. In most cases, as in Treviso, there are more people with citizenship than without it, but there is little difference. On the other hand, in other cases, the ones with citizenship are outnumbered by the ones who don't have it, especially in Verona and Venice, but still little variation.

Another element to take into account concerns the distinction between the CNI students born in Italy or extra UE. Observing the data, it seems that the latter predominates, in Belluno and Rovigo but in terms of the students born in Italy, Padova and Verona seem to stand out. Treviso reaches a high score in both cases with 81.7% of extra UE students mostly in I grade (87.5%) and primary school (80%), while 63.4% for the ones born in Italy, concentrated in nursery school (84.7%) and primary school (71.3%).

As for the work environment, the report “ XV rapporto annuale: gli stranieri nel mercato del lavoro in Italia (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, 2025) highlights that, in Italy, the outcomes in the year 2024 have been promising because, compared to the previous year, with an increasing number of foreign employers (2.514.000), constituted by the prevalence of non-EU people (1.766.720).

Furthermore, the most influential areas for workers are the northwest and east while, the least ones, are the central and the southern parts with more employment in the following sectors:

other collective and personal services (30.9%), agriculture (20%), hotels and restaurants (18.5%). Every sector indicates a majority of non-UE people, 22.4% in the first one, 14.9% in the second one and, lastly, 14.7% in the third one.

1.2 Migration and acculturation

According to Kok (1999) the term migration refers to the movement of a person or people from one country to another. Particularly significant is that there are many different types of migrants, with specific reasons for why they move from their country and who might decide to stay in the host country permanently or only temporarily:

- **Working immigrants:** their purpose is to collaborate working in the new society.
- **Seasonal immigrants:** they don't stay in the host country very long. They mostly come to work for brief periods of time, and, in fact, there is no intention of living there permanently.
- **Skilled migrants and entrepreneurs:** they are a very important resource for the new society because of their specific abilities. They are very qualified, and their contribution is so important that countries like Australia developed a special program called the "migration program". They seem to be very helpful for the economic growth of the nation, that is why as suggested by the Australian government (2026), its aim is to convince migrants to move to the country to specialize in several working positions.
- **Accompanying family members (family reunifications):** foreign family members can reunite if they have a specific visa which is not very easy to obtain. For example, in our country it is permitted when there is a legal union of marriage or children that are under eighteen years old. Furthermore, the European commission (2025) claims that this migration is accepted in the case of adults, who can be either children or parents, that have serious medical conditions and need support from their families.
- **Refugees:** during the Ginevra convention in 1951 and its protocol in 1967 agreements have been made about what it meant to be a refugee and an asylum seeker. As indicated by Philips, (2015) a refugee is someone who escapes from their country because of extremely dangerous conditions such as violence or persecution. On the contrary, asylum seeker is the one who is looking for international protection. The problem for the latter is that they often can't really prove they are in danger at the moment of protection request, they might have to wait a long time before being recognized as refugees, if it happens.

-Irregular migrants, traffic victims: the first includes people who enter a new environment not following the rules of the process of migration of that specific country, for example not having a visa or the requested documents to travel.

However, it is important to notice that the term irregular is the most appropriate for this type of immigrants and not “illegal” because, as stated by Crépeau et al. (2021) this expression suggests criminal implications, instead in this case it is considered a violation of administrative regulations. On the contrary, traffic victims, are persons who are obligated by other people to move, without their consent to do whatever activity these criminals want them to do.

Both men and women are subjected to this violent act, but sadly as suggested by Cabana et al. (2017), there are more victims of the female gender.

There are three main phases of migration:

- 1) Departing
- 2) Travel
- 3) Arrival

The decisions taken by immigrants before departing are very important. The person who migrates needs to have all the documents needed by the country of origin and of arrival like passports and visas. For this reason, it is necessary to know the specific measures of each country to avoid complications and facilitate the whole process of migration.

It is ideal to try to arrange the transportation on your own and do it by following the procedures. However, immigrants often find themselves facing many obstacles in the legal migration and for this reason they could decide to relate to what is called smuggling. The European commission (2025) highlights the fact that individuals who undertake this activity (smugglers) should assist them in the process but, on the contrary, they usually are not interested in helping them but only in making money from it illegally.

This phase can be very challenging for foreigners as they travel in horrible conditions, for example without enough food or water or sitting in urine and in most cases, it is sadly characterized by experiences of abuse, violence and even death. The poor conditions of travelling can also cause the spreading of different diseases during the voyage and among the most common ones, as indicated by Castelli et al. (2017), there are pulmonary tuberculosis and mites.

It can also be very risky if we consider that there are many people who want to disembark, and not all of them decide to do it for the right reasons, not only can there be traffickers but also corruptors, criminals of all kinds who can be a serious issue for migrants.

When immigrants arrive at destination, they start interacting with the new environment and coming into contact with the community. The term connected to this specific moment is called acculturation which not only encounters contact but also the consequences of it, being several changes in different aspects of the respective societies. Sokolskaya et al. (2020) explored the history of acculturation.

The term was first coined in 1880 by the American ethnologist John Wesley Powell, in a report for the US bureau of Ethnology and initially theorized by the American ethnologist Franz Boas and the Australian scientist Richard Turnwald in the second half of the 1890s. At the start of the 19th century many important figures tried to explore the topic more like Robert Park, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead.

However, it was in the 50s and 60s that an increase in Acculturation research was registered with important works by Beals, Graves and Herskovits. The latter made great contribution to the topic, highlighting the need to navigate the ethnohistorical aspect of it. The 1960s and 70s were vital years as well in which German scientist, as Wolfgang Rudolph and Wilhelm Emil Mulhmann, shared their vision on the subject, the first mentioned, for example, focused particularly on the obstacles that emerged during the contact.

In the 70s, the soviet scientist Tokarev had probably the most closed perspective on the topic associated with Berry (1997) modern consideration of the term “Acculturation”, referring to it as the process of change in a particular society because of the influence between different cultures. Finally, in the 1990s more detailed analysis started to take shape. Berry, who was a Canadian psychologist, in 1992 elaborated four strategies that he thought could arise because of the process of acculturation. These are called “Acculturation strategies” and the four possibilities are: Integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. The difference between them is the degree of acceptance and rejection of the new socio-cultural environment. The first strategy is the ideal one since it concerns the highest level of acceptance of the host country’s features and beliefs but also keeping a strong connection to one’s original culture features, helping to keep the part of one’s identity related to the country of origin.

In the case of the second one, a migrant is not very interested in being connected to his/her country’s roots and instead wants to be completely incorporated into the society of settlement. This probably contains a complete level of acceptance of the host culture, which cannot be considered very helpful. It arguably can be significant to coexist in the country of arrival, but it will, surely, show the damaging consequences in time. As a matter of fact, completely leaving someone’s past behind could possibly cause losing various elements of personality.

The third strategy is called separation, which has negative traits as it occurs when the person has the desire to distance himself/herself from any type of correlation with other members of the arrival community. The last possibility is that of marginalization and this option concerns the migrant behaving almost passively, without showing any social interest in general or towards their country of origin or the host country. Of course, the latter is not a very typical or in any way useful type of strategy and, in fact, it actually takes place on the occasion in which the decision is caused by either imposed assimilation or exclusion.

1.3 The phenomenon of adaptation and the role of intercultural sensitivity

The focus of this thesis is the sociocultural aspect of adaptation and so it is necessary to distinguish it from the psychological one. It was only in the 1990s that the scholars Ward et al. (1999) pointed out the distinction between the two and, according to them, the main difference is that the first one is associated to the state of mind of immigrants, how they mentally cope with the difficulties of the adaptation process, while the second one is more related to the behavioral ability to integrate in the host culture.

Among the most common factors that can influence the psychological aspect of adaptation there are personality, life changes, and social support. The role of social support in this matter is vital, as studies have shown (Novara et al., 2023), that it can strongly contribute to immigrants' satisfaction with life, resilience and sense of community. As for personality, Sangwan (2023) highlights five main traits that could determine the turnout of the process which are included in the big five model:

- **Extraversion:** level of sociability
- **Agreeableness:** ability to cooperate
- **Conscientiousness:** organization and task orientation
- **Neuroticism:** ability to deal with negative emotions
- **Openness to experience**

About sociocultural adaptation, the factors that usually influence it are length of residence, language ability, cultural distance and acculturation strategies. Hofstede (2011) implemented a model which indicates the six dimensions that can affect how different cultures are perceived by immigrants:

1) Power distance: how small or large societies deal with inequalities. The first type seems to be more concentrated on giving voice to the desires of the population, aiming for example to the distribution of income and an educational system focused on the students.

2) **Uncertainty avoidance:** how societies deal with the stress of not knowing what the future holds. Weak uncertainty avoidance environments can have the positive aspect of being less connected to the feeling of stress towards the unknown even though there is also the problematic of not having the need for clarity preferring chaos.

3) **Individualism vs collectivist:** individualist environments tend to be more focused on the “I” dynamic rather than collectivist ones which are more open to the dynamic of the group.

4) **Masculinity vs femininity:** masculine societies appear to be exclusively interested on valuing men needs while feminine ones tend to have more balance between the genders both in the emotional and social level.

5) **Long term or short-term orientation:** the difference stands in the choice by societies to focus on the present and the past or the future. Long term orientation environments seem to be more open to other countries, to change and adapt to different circumstances.

6) **Indulgence vs restraint:** this is related to the level of control of human desires and enjoyment of life. Restraint societies promote control establishing a more stable society even though there is the risk of people not being happy, mainly because of the lack of freedom. Indulgent ones, on the contrary, don’t have this risk but there can be the opposite problem, which is chaos caused by the uncompleted presence of restrictions.

In general, in Italy, high levels of discrimination are perceived, especially considering factors like age, gender, economical status and duration of stay. For example, as research established (Quaglia et al., 2022), people that come from weaker economic backgrounds and males of central age classes, with a longer duration of stay in Italy, feel more discriminated and so it is important to implement policies to reduce people’s health inequalities and promote social integration, therefore facilitating the process of socio - cultural adaptation.

It is also necessary to mention that it was Vygotsky to first introduce the sociocultural theory and the three main sociocultural factors that according to him can impact human development, which can be relevant for positive adaptation.

The first element to take into consideration is the conception of learning, which is considered a process that only occurs when there is social contact, that is to say, when people interact with each other. According to Vygotsky, communication is not just useful to acquire social skills, but it has the double function of enabling to develop thinking skills and cognitive development. He also highlights the crucial role of education and language, claiming that the latter can be helpful both to communicate and construct meaning.

The last element is the zone of proximal development, also known as ZPD, which as highlighted by Van der Veer (2020) refers to the ability of the teacher to understand the capacity of the

student to independently learn and the influence of guidance in the process. Noteworthy are the factors that affect ZPD, suggested by Fani et al. (2011):

- Guiders
- Context
- Technology

The first factor is related to the importance of guided support for pupils to effectively learn, while the second one highlights the fact that depending on where the class takes place the teacher has to respect the rules of that specific country. The third element can be considered a great example of scaffolding, and it is the most important for the purpose of this thesis as it will be the focus of the next sections.

Immigrants' adaptation experience can be strongly influenced by their perception of themselves and others, which is the basis of the well-known Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity and another element of discussion in the following chapters. Developing this skill means being able not only to recognize the existence of other cultures but also to respect them, which could be very helpful to reduce difficulties in social interactions and generally make the process of adaptation easier.

According to Bennett (2017) there seems to be a pattern in the development of this ability which is characterized by the following steps:

1) Denial: in this first phase immigrants don't acknowledge the existence of other cultures at all, perceiving oneself as the only possible real, complex identity and others as too simple, almost not real.

2) Defense: in the second stage there is a first attempt at recognizing the presence of different cultures. However, recognition is usually represented by a connection to stereotypes. They have the feeling of being superior, and people from other countries are still not perceived as real human beings but through general distorted perceptions about them.

3) Minimization: In this phase of intercultural sensitivity there is a higher awareness of other cultures, but it is connected mainly to similarities and perceiving others as all the same.

4) Acceptance: at this point foreigners start to really be interested in other cultural differences even though the problem in this case is that there is still not enough cultural knowledge and ability to adjust the behavior to the different social contexts. This is also a relevant step for immigrants because even if they don't agree with other people values their negative judgment is not necessarily based on just the fact that they come from a different part of the world.

5) Adaptation: immigrants have now the ability to appropriately behave according to the various contexts. They shift between other cultures very freely with creating, however,

the issue of authenticity which is associated with the possibility of not knowing what your real identity is.

6) Integration: being in the last stage means having reached the highest level of intercultural sensitivity. Immigrants should have resolved all the problems related to the previous stages, being able to recognize their true identity, other cultures, accurate adaptive behaviors, including how to communicate according to the specific contexts.

Chapter 2. Social media in the process of adaptation

2.1 An introduction on social networks

Contemporary society is digitalized, which means that internet activities have become a central part of daily life, especially with the evolution of Web 2.0, which refers to all the applications that allow users to be real active creators of content rather than just passive. As indicated by Wolf et al (2017), social media are part of web 2.0, as they are defined, as all the sites and apps in which people have the possibility to create a profile and engage in many activities.

As indicated by Dhingra and Mudgal (2019), the launch of Facebook was crucial for the rise of social networks as it can be considered the first modern archetype of social media that gained popularity, allowing users to communicate but to also generate and share content more freely. Driven by this success, as indicated in the report by Eurostat (2026), the use of social platforms has reached 89% of young Europeans social network users in the year 2025, with a higher percentage between the age of 16 and 29.

2.2 The role of social networks as a form of acculturation

As indicated in the abstract, this thesis is based on a project called “Vie di uscita. Storie di scatti e di vita” (Banzato, 2025), organized by the department of comparative linguistic and cultural studies at Cà Foscari university of Venice. This project has the main purpose of understanding how social networks can be useful for the process of socio-cultural adaptation of immigrants. This aspect will be explored in the next section focusing on exploring the influence, on immigrants’ process of adaptation, of the different functions of social media as a form of acculturation. These functions are precisely related to interaction, information, production, participation, learning a new language and use of translating instruments. In addition, another

element will be taken into account, that is explored in the research project, which is the level of immigrants' intercultural sensitivity, trying also to analyze the possible incidence of social media use.

This chapter, to analyze these aspects, will focus on the recent state of the art regarding the different possible uses of social media, but not related to young Italian immigrants, which is still necessary to understand the role each social media function can have on the process of adaptation of immigrants, before going into detail on the Italian situation, with the case study of this thesis. The positive and negative aspects of these functions will be taken into consideration, to have a wider perspective on the matter. Specifically, about the interaction and information functions, the relevance of social media will be associated with helping immigrants process of adaptation in the society of settlement, through strong and weak ties, also considering the serious issues associated with social isolation, communicating with strangers online and false information. Regarding participation, it will be distinguished how effective could digital participation be for immigrants' integration, with respect to social participation, referring to the active and passive use of social media.

As for production, the main point of discussion will be on the role of creation of content on social media platforms on identity formation and the challenges of online audiences and the comparison with the content created by influencers. To analyze the significance of learning a new language, learners' ability to acquire linguistic skills by learning individually or interacting socially on social networks will be examined, also concentrating on the useful translation tools that are offered by these platforms.

To conclude, the influence of social media on intercultural sensitivity will be taken into account focusing, more specifically, on the role of influencers and the algorithm.

2.3 The communicative and informative functions of social media

Rademacher et al. (2014) highlight the importance of understanding how social media is used as a communication tool, depending on the type of social tie that connects the communicators. The attribution of "strong" or "weak" social ties is said to be determined by frequency, duration, and intimacy of contact. Weak ties are more often associated with infrequent interaction and low emotional closeness, occurring primarily between individuals from diverse cultural or demographic backgrounds. On the contrary, it is emphasized that strong ties are associated with more frequent social interactions and greater emotional attachment and are usually established among individuals who share similar sociocultural characteristics.

It was underlined in chapter 1 that successful integration requires immigrants to feel connected to the country of settlement but also to maintain a strong connection to the country of origin. Through social media, immigrants can navigate this dual reality, preserving both their social bonds with friends and family and with other members of the new community. A noteworthy affordance of social media is that they provide opportunity to strengthen social ties. These dynamics are exemplified in Bezulska's article (2026), in which a research study is represented that was conducted to analyze the role of social media in allowing internal and international foreigners in Poland to maintain their social relationships with the country-of-origin community while also building new social relationships with the society of settlement. The respondents highlighted the importance of social networks in helping them stay in constant contact with their friends and family, slowing the tendency of these social ties to weaken during their time in the host country, and overcoming loneliness, especially during the early days of living in an unfamiliar environment. Furthermore, the positive aspect of social networks is highlighted in strengthening these social bonds, as participants indicated that they considered long-distance relationships to be more solid and deep, which can still be maintained through social media platforms as a communication tool. In addition, the case study indicates that communicating through social media can help people feel less alone and closer to the people who live in the host country.

However, it is necessary to reflect on the main points discussed regarding the potential of social networks for immigrants to build and strengthen new social relationships in the society of settlement, though this is not always fully achievable. This is because, on the one hand, respondents stated that they use online activities to build and strengthen new social bonds in the host country and to feel less like outcasts, but mainly with other immigrants from the same country or from different nationalities. It can be presumed that this is due to their mutual understanding stemming from a shared socio-cultural background. What appears to emerge from the article is that it can be difficult for many foreigners to make new friends in the host country who are not from the same or a similar socio-cultural environment, particularly because of language barriers. For these reasons, it can be said that it is easier to consider strong ties for immigrants, namely the social relationships established and possibly strengthened between them and people from foreign countries and host nationals as weak ties. Low contact with host natives can be a contributor to a negative process of integration, considering social isolation. As indicated by Primack et al. (2017), being socially isolated means having the feeling of not belonging socially and not being able to interact with people and build real lasting relationships truly. Apart from the linguistic issue, Primack (2017) highlights that social isolation is

especially felt by young people, who may rely too much on online interactions and exclude real-life ones. The serious implications could be that the process of adaptation for foreigners becomes harder, as they may feel socially isolated because they are stuck in a social media reality, where communication can be very limited or almost nonexistent. In fact, not all random social media users may be interested in using online methods as a tool for communication, and there is also no certainty that they want to expand the online friendship into a real one. This specific problem is evident in the previously mentioned case study in Poland, as participants reported trying to ask people they had met online who live in the host country to meet in person, but the people they reached out to avoided face-to-face meetings. Avoiding social relationships outside the digital world and relying too much on online interactions, which can be superficial and that often do not lead to real-life social relationships, could increase the feeling of being socially isolated in both real-life environments and social networks.

Another aspect of social media that can foster a sense of social support in the host country is that, as Sari (2025) affirms, social networks are used by psychologists as a sort of curriculum vitae, presenting themselves and their activities to a larger audience. They could be very helpful for immigrants, especially if they can find people to talk to about the challenges of the migration process and related adaptation. However, there is a need to be sure that the person who gives this type of support is actually reliable and a professional, which can be very hard to find on social media, considering the high presence of users and the easy way to share content and ideas without needing to expose any previous formation and qualifications about psychological matters. To avoid the risks the solution could be to trust profiles that clearly declare their qualifications.

Another factor to consider is talking to strangers online, especially for young people. When talking online, even with a normal profile or description, it can be difficult to know who is hiding behind the screen, so the role of parents can be crucial in trying to educate their children about the use of social media for communication and safety risks. For example, it should be taught to create a profile without inserting personal information such as full name and surname, phone number, email, and home address. In this case, there should be a communicative approach between the children and the parents, which could be beneficial for understanding whether the person on the screen can be trusted. In addition, as indicated by the European Union (2025), if the child and the other user decide to meet in person, they should always inform their parents during the meeting, or, even better, when an adult is present.

Hagg et al. (2018) affirm that specifically social networks facilitate access to global information. This factor is significant, as it implies that immigrants can access both news from

the host country and from the country of origin, helping them better integrate into the new society because, as mentioned before, it is necessary for them to maintain connections with both national identities.

Noteworthy is that the news about the host country can be discovered at the moment of arrival but also in advance, which can be crucial for foreigners to be better positioned to migrate to a place with actual opportunities rather than not being well informed and ending up in a disadvantaged environment to live in.

It can be said that weak ties can be useful for the adaptation process of immigrants, as they facilitate access to new information about the host country. As a matter of fact, maintaining weak ties with host nationals can be very resourceful, given the limited capacity of home-country friends and family to share information about the host society, as they may lack knowledge and experience in a socio-cultural environment different from their own. In this regard, Bahl et al (2026) indicate that foreigners tend to prioritize experienced people as sources of information. Therefore, it can be relevant the role of other immigrants who have lived in the host country for longer to help, by sharing their experiences online, inexperienced foreigners in discovering information about the new sociocultural environment, especially considering what was previously discussed about the tendency of stronger interaction with people in the host country that come from similar socio-cultural backgrounds. This implies that strong ties with close immigrant friends who live and have experience in the host country may also be necessary to provide newcomers with host-country information.

More specifically, as suggested by Beretta et al. (2018), among the most useful information related to the society of settlement that immigrants can access through social media there are: job applications, educational and language programs, health care and medical services, and transportation.

Simultaneously, strong ties associated with friends and family in the home country remain essential, playing a key role in providing immigrants opportunities to reach information associated with the country of origin, which is also important for integration, as indicated by Valgas et al. (2025), is meaningful for immigrants mainly because of the emotional and familiarity elements.

Despite these advantages, navigating digital information presents a significant challenge that immigrants have to face: false information. As highlighted by Alhajjar (2024), false declarations can be expressed as disinformation or misinformation, which can be distinguished by the intention of the person who shares them. As a matter of fact, the first one is characterized by an intentional attitude, which is usually used to purposely harm someone and is very

common of political campaigns. On the contrary, in the second case, there is no intention of spreading wrong information for particular goals and it is often due to having heard false news from other sources.

A noteworthy issue is also that sometimes, it can be very difficult to trust information resources on social media because, as suggested by Tomasi and Vicari (2023), very often the news reshared could be accurate but dated, as many people tend to share them without knowing they may be related to months or even years prior. To mitigate the risks of distorted declarations, relying on official journalists' accounts as information sources could be an effective strategy.

2.4 Social media to learn a new language and the use of translating instruments

Immigrants can also learn a new language through social media, often informally. In general, formal learning is more closely associated with learning that occurs in institutionalized environments, mostly schools. In contrast, informal learning is associated with the knowledge people gain through everyday experiences outside formal contexts.

As indicated by Johnson et al. (2022), a lack of specific structure characterizes informal learning contexts, and learning can be unintentional, meaning the learner may not consciously realize he/she is acquiring linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, learning informally implies greater intrinsic motivation, as there is no specific reward beyond the internal satisfaction of improving linguistic skills, and it places greater emphasis on aspects, such as social and emotional elements, rather than on traditional contexts, which usually focus on knowledge acquisition. Particularly significant data on this function are explored in a case study by Mendes et al. (2024), which analyzed 200 students who use social media as an educational tool, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The research project indicates that these platforms offer many opportunities to learn languages more informally outside traditional learning contexts. First of all, it seems easier for immigrants to incorporate learning a new language on social media into the daily routine because of its high flexibility, which allows users to engage with the language whenever and wherever they want. Probably the focal point discussed is the satisfaction of different learning styles. As stated by Haque (2020), immigrants, when learning informally, have complete autonomy and control over their educational formation, which means they can adjust their use of online platforms to suit their preferred learning methods. For example, it is suggested by Mendes et al. (2024) that Instagram focuses on more active informal

language learning related to speaking and listening, while Twitter implies more passive learning concentrated on reading and writing.

More specifically, they can choose from two distinct techniques: individual and social language learning. It is suggested that participants learning individually, for example, by observing daily posts from host nationals, had a greater chance of being exposed to the use of the target language in real-life situations. This is very important, as immigrants are able to acquire slangs, idiomatic phrases, and colloquial expressions of the target language and feel more confident when communicating. It also appears relevant that, for individual learning, many online teachers offer educational help on social media. One factor to consider is that learning in a formal environment can be limited due to the specific characteristics of the context in which it occurs. As a matter of fact, institutionalized teachers need to respect the rules of the schools they work for and adjust lessons according to the time they have, so they are able to teach only a certain number of notions per week. This is not a current issue on social media because there is no time limit, meaning teachers can decide when and how much linguistic content to share, which will be permanently available to immigrants unless deleted. This implies that the latter, using social platforms, can access an almost unlimited amount of educational content related to a new language, making the process of acquiring linguistic knowledge easier and faster.

As for social language learning, Mendes et al. (2024) also emphasize the importance of learning a new language through participation and interaction with the host-country community. It is highlighted that online users can use social networks to interact with native speakers through chatting and video calling, which is necessary to receive rapid feedback on the correct or incorrect use of the target language. In this matter, it is also necessary to consider Tulenova's work (2024). In fact, in her case study, examining final state university students referring to the relevance of social media to effectively learn English as a second language, she observed the power of interaction, especially with classmates and the participation functions already mentioned, for language development, especially related to speaking fluency, vocabulary, and writing skills.

However, as noted in Mendes (2024), the most significant issue with this specific social network function concerns online content reliability. If, with the presence of online teachers, it can be less common to find linguistic errors, the same cannot be said for the other cases in which there is less control over the linguistic details. As a matter of fact, research has established (Bonsale et al, 2025) through the content analysis of 600 posts on Twitter and Reddit platforms, with a survey of 200 users, the high presence of linguistic fallacies (65%), especially including rhetorical errors, like *ad hominem* and false dichotomy. The negative implication for

immigrants could be that they believe they have acquired linguistic abilities when, in reality, they have adopted an inaccurate use of the target language.

Whether learning to be individualistic or social, it is important for immigrants to acquire accurate use of the host country's language because, as Adeyeye (2024) suggests, language barriers can lead to ineffective communication and consequent marginalization in society. Education can play an important role, as teachers can teach students how to self-manage their learning (Karlen et al., 2023).

As affirmed by Awawdeh et al. (2025) there is criticism around the topic of the use of translating instruments to learn a new language because, it is often considered, as a technique that it doesn't fully measure the language proficiency of users and that, if used excessively, could cause too much dependence from it and distance learners from the actual learning of a new language. Despite this, in recent years there has been a more positive perspective on the matter, highlighting that, with caution, it can be a useful method for acquiring a foreign language. For example, immigrants could benefit from its use simply by changing the preferred language in app settings. In fact, selecting Italian as the default language will automatically translate all post descriptions and captions into Italian. This way, when they read a post on social media written by their friends or family in their mother tongue, they can also have it translated into the host-country language, with the option to compare the two translations. Scholars (Awawdeh et al., 2025) reveal that AI-driven translation tools can play an important role in enhancing foreign language abilities, partly due to their creative and innovative traits.

In particular, Meta AI has recently introduced a new feature that enables users to watch reels created by others with audio lip-synced and translated into various languages, including English and Spanish, as well as more specific ones such as Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Telugu. This way, immigrants who speak those languages can watch a video in Italian and have the translation in their mother tongue very easily and quickly.

The automatic translation offered by AI can also be helpful in the case of the creation of content and, in fact, before sharing a reel it is possible to select the options of the languages the reels can be translated to so that users can be able to speak in a certain language and then check if what their saying is correct, by checking the voice translation in the language spoken in their country of origin. Of course, the issue is that the languages offered for the translation are still very limited, but Meta AI will surely work to continuously update them in time.

Furthermore, using various translation tools, such as Deepl or Google Translate, to create content on social media can be very effective in helping immigrants learn a foreign language. More specifically, Khasanah et al. (2022) suggest that Google Translate is very helpful, as it

offers many online services, such as a dictionary, a thesaurus, and a spelling checker. In particular, it appears that people consider this instrument a plausible and effective method for improving pronunciation skills in a foreign language, especially for understanding more difficult words.

2.5 Other social network functions: participation, production and intercultural sensitivity

It is noteworthy that producing content on social media can affect the formation of online users' identity. The content narrative shared on these platforms represents the user's identity at that specific moment in time, which, as Torres (2024) states, can be continuously shaped by both intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. The first scenario relates to self-conception and individual perception, while the second is associated with online encounters that can prompt users to reflect on their beliefs and opinions about themselves and the rest of the world. This means that users' productive actions on social media, and therefore their digital identity, depend on their individual characteristics and their interactions with the digital world. In the article just mentioned, two specific interpersonal aspects of social media are identified as particularly relevant to identity formation: comparison and the online audience.

The first element refers to the common possibility that young users online do not create unique, personal content but instead base their creation process on online trends, comparing themselves to the lifestyles of accounts that receive more views and likes, especially those of famous influencers. It can be said, in this case, that it is very important for immigrants to give an accurate digital representation of themselves, without relying too much on viral content creators, because providing a distorted digital identity that doesn't correspond to the one in real life seems to cause serious implications associated with an identity crisis.

The second element is connected with the large number of online users who can provide rapid feedback on content produced on social media. Negative feedback from other users on content created on social media can be considered one of the biggest problems for productive function. In the case of mistakes, for example, in the information shared or the language used, both in the videos created and, in the comments, the responses should be polite. However, it is not the case more often, as there is a lot of hate spread by people online. This can be a strong contributor to a negative process of adaptation of immigrants, as it can strongly influence their mental health, especially of young adults (Bashir et al., 2022). To reduce the risk of negative feedback on

content produced on social networks, it is necessary to emphasize the need for immigrants to pay attention to the message they convey and how they convey it. The reactions will be positive only if the content shared is accurate, which is not always easy, especially given the online material's reliability, as underlined, for example, by false information.

Digital participation can be very important for the integration process of immigrants, as stated by Seifert et al. (2018), not participating in online activities may lead to a feeling of social exclusion. However, it is important to consider that, as Villi (2016) indicates, there are two types of participation on social media: implicit and explicit. The main distinction between the two lies in the user's intention to either engage with other online users and their content (explicit) or watch it passively, without being consciously productive (implicit). Considering these aspects, it can be said that the online activities that should be more useful for immigrants to foster active participation are the ones that involve more explicit production, such as sharing experiences in the host country or communicating in Italian groups, rather than simply participating in online cultural events or accessing information, which imply a more passive, implicit participation.

However, it should be noted that implicit participation can also be highly relevant despite lower interactivity with the digital environment. Participating in cultural events, for example, can be necessary to integrate into the host community by getting to know new people while also practicing language and increasing cultural awareness. In addition, there seems to be a crucial relationship between the information function of social media and social interaction, particularly in participating by learning the cultural aspects of the host country. In this matter, Erdem (2018), who aimed to study how social media could be useful for immigrants to integrate into the host society, underlines that acquiring knowledge of the surrounding culture on online platforms facilitates, in particular, offline social interaction with other members of the host-country community and therefore enhances integration.

It's important to consider that the most important issue associated with digital participation is that there is not the same level of interaction that can occur in real-life occasions (social participation). In fact, as research has established (Lieberman et al., 2020), there is greater social connection when engaging in social interaction, including the ability to understand nonverbal cues and avoid miscommunication. Despite the high exposure on social media to opportunities to feel participatory, the only method that, as discussed, should be more effective for active participation was referred to as being actively productive, while in other cases it was suggested to be more implicit engagement. This means that social media allows users to engage with online content, both actively and passively facilitating the integration of young foreigners but

they also need to engage socially to foster a stronger sense of active participation in the host country.

Intercultural sensitivity is an important aspect of sociocultural adaptation, as explored in chapter 1 in relation to Bennett's developmental model of intercultural communication. The role of social networks is relevant in this matter, with both positive and negative aspects that could impact and shape immigrants' cross-cultural perceptions and consequently the ability to integrate in the host country. Taking into account Mabere et al. research (2023), it is highlighted that, in social networks, there is continuous cultural exposure that is more limited in traditional social encounters and that can lead users to discover unknown characteristics, perspectives, traditions, and lifestyles of different cultures, possibly increasing acceptance and appreciation for cultural diversity.

Noteworthy are the main points discussed related to the elements that can shape and challenge users' cross-cultural awareness. It was already discussed when referring to the production function that identity formation can be caused by relying too much on what trends online. In this case, there is a similar challenge: the part of one's identity associated with intercultural sensitivity can easily be shaped by people who have more views and likes. These people are called influencers and are largely responsible for cultural representation, which concerns how people from other cultures, along with their beliefs and values, are perceived in the digital world. It is very common for these influencers to share distorted information, perceptions of different cultures, spread stereotypes, or oversimplify important cultural characteristics.

The main issue with all these elements is that, because of social media algorithms, it can be challenging to find diverse content on certain topics, which can lead users to be stuck in the so-called "echo chambers". This term refers to a specific context in which the information shared is only used to confirm preexisting perspectives on the matter. This is because, as stated by Putri et al. (2024), social media algorithms show content based on search history, likes, and interactions.

This means that social networks could be a helpful tool for immigrants to shape their cultural identity and increase their acknowledgment of the existence of other cultures and their differentiations but, more realistically, it can be difficult as there is not much the chance for them to listen to multiple perspectives and change ideas, opinions because of the linear meanings represented by content creators, that is shown due to the algorithm. Certainly, the issue could be solved by paying attention to the content watched and the influencers followed, as it could be more possible for the algorithm to show more diversified videos about cultural matters.

Chapter 3. Methodology

In this chapter, the technical and rational aspects related to the study's methodology will be covered. It starts with a description of the research project and the setting in which it was carried out, followed by general details about the participants. Along with the design, there is an explanation of the instruments, administration, and data analysis.

3.1 Setting

This study is based on the project "Vie di uscita. Storie di Scatti e di vita," one of the line actions of the project of excellence (2023-2027). The initiative is organized by the Department of Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (2023-2027) and coordinated by researchers Monica Banzato, Mustafa Marchych and Graziano Serragiotto (Banzato, 2025). The project adopts two mixed research approaches: quantitative and qualitative. The latter consists of several workshops characterized by narrative methods such as Photovoice or Story crafting. The aim, in this case, is to dive into the personal experiences of immigrants in the sociocultural and emotional adaptation, while also encouraging active participation and self-reflection.

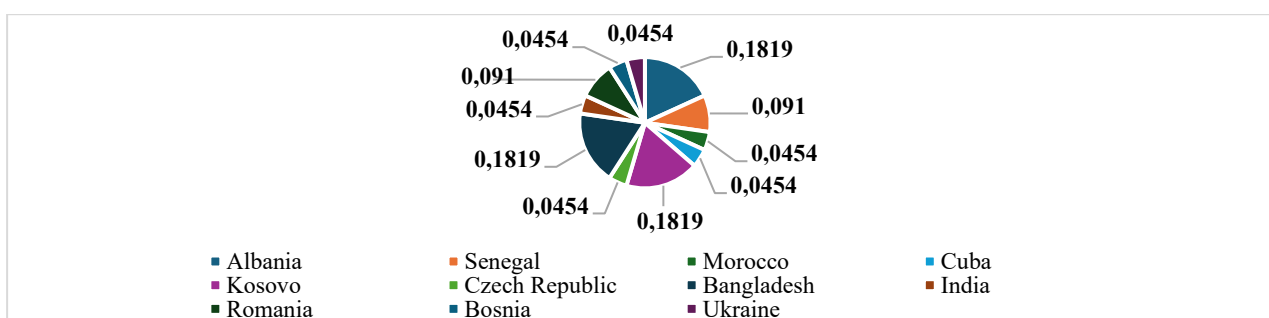
In the case of this thesis, it was decided to use the quantitative method (questionnaire), related to the research project just mentioned, and that was designed to analyze the influence of social media on the process of socio cultural adaptation of young foreigners', specifically associated with the ability to build and maintain social relationships, acquire information, learn a new language, produce content and participate in the host culture. Furthermore, this research tool allows the administrator to explore the participants' openness to the existence and acceptance of other cultures.

The research was carried out at an educational institution located in the north-eastern part of Italy. The choice of this specific school was mainly due to its vital contribution to the integration of immigrants, both young and adults. It offers several courses of formation in specific fields such as multimedia graphics, sales service, mechanics, car repair, electronics, wellness, and hairdressing. It also helps individuals deal with many challenges in their educational and work careers, providing several scholastic-work orientation and consultation services. This organization operates locally across different parts of Italy and globally in countries such as Brazil and Colombia.

3.2 Participants

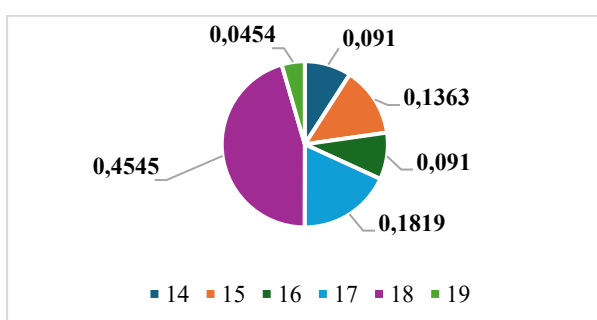
The sample for this study comprises 22 students (12 females and 10 males), from different countries, all attending various educational courses offered by the educational institution previously mentioned. This part of the chapter outlines details about the participants. It provides basic individual attributes (Nationality, age, job titles and aspirations) useful for a general understanding of the students who participated in the project. Considering the nationality factor, as represented, most immigrants in this institution come from Albania, Kosovo, and Bangladesh (18,19%), followed by Romania and Senegal (9,1%). The other countries have limited influence, with only 4,54% each (See figure 3.2.).

Figure 3.2 Relative frequencies of students' nationalities



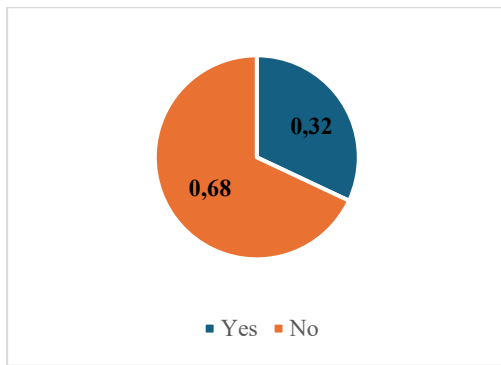
Taking age into account, Figure 3.3. shows a higher presence of students aged 18 (45,45%) and 17 (18,19%), fewer than 15 (13,63%), 16 and 14 (9,10%), and 19 (4,5%).

Figure 3.3 Relative frequencies of students' age



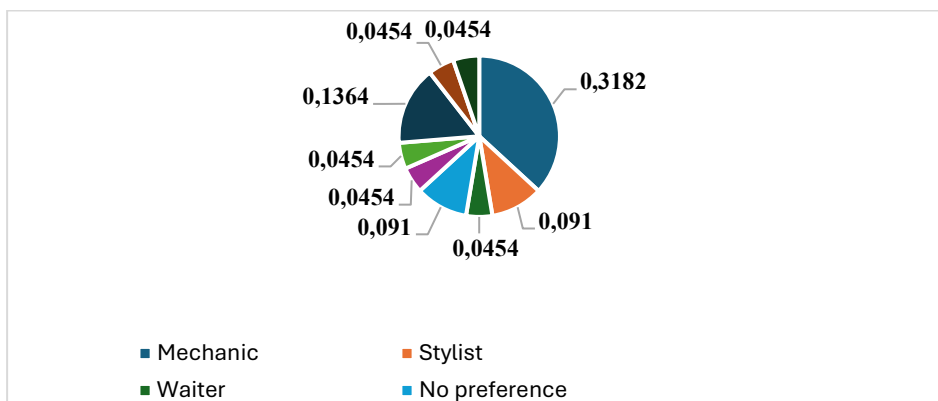
The following figure shows that the majority of students (68%) had no prior work experience, compared with 32% of workers. This is not a cause for concern, as it is obvious given the students' young age (See figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Relative frequencies of student's previous work experience



The participants selected the following future dream jobs in Italy: mechanic (31.82%), hairdresser (13.64%), and stylist (9.1%). No preference reaches 9,1%, while the other occupations are the least influential, at only 4,54% each. The results seem to indicate a positive attitude towards the certainty of young immigrants' future careers and their coherence with the subjects of their studies (See figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Relative frequencies of future dream job in Italy.



3.3 Design

The use of the questionnaire proved to be the best choice to achieve the research goal for the following main reasons. The first is that it enables the administrator to easily collect a significant amount of specific data on the topic in a short time using closed-ended, multiple-choice questions.

Secondly, it respects participants' privacy by using a printed questionnaire that does not request any names or surnames, thereby guaranteeing the complete anonymity of their answers.

Thirdly, this technique also creates a very relaxed atmosphere, allowing students to answer questions without undue anxiety or embarrassment, especially if they don't have a strong grasp of Italian. Another element that avoided this feeling was the selection of questions aimed at generalizing the matter without delving too deeply into the participants' immigration experience, given that, in many cases, it could be quite difficult to tell because of the pain involved.

3.4 Instruments

The questionnaire was written in Italian, and it is composed of two studies. The first is the digital acculturation practices questionnaire for migrant adolescents (DAP-QAM) (Banzato, 2025). In contrast, the second refers to the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale Questionnaire (ICSSQ), which is based on Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), as mentioned in chapter 1 (see section 1.3). The resulting questionnaire was then divided into three main sections: 1) General information, 2) Social network, 3) Intercultural sensitivity.

3.4.1 Consent Acknowledgment

In this part that anticipates the questionnaire, the title of the thesis project is indicated: "Influence of social network on the sociocultural process of adaptation of young migrants in Italy". Furthermore, the participants or their parents, in the case of minors, are asked to write down their name and surname, followed by a whole part dedicated to the brief description of the thesis project, mainly the details about the administrator, the supervisors, and the different parts into which the questionnaire is divided. The following section provides important clarifications on how questionnaire-related information is collected, specifically noting that it will be analyzed to draw general considerations on the influence of social media on the sociocultural adaptation process of immigrants. It is also mentioned that the administration is anonymous, aiming to respect the privacy associated with DLGS 163/2017, Ex art. 13 DL. 196/2003 and ex art. 13 European Regulation 2016/679. This section ends with a statement indicating availability for further information or clarification, and the signatures of the participants/parents.

3.4.2 First section: General information

This part of the questionnaire collects general information on participants' socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, nationality, and educational level.

3.4.3 Second section: Social network

This is the first section of the questionnaire that will be analyzed in the following chapters. It refers to the underlying perspective on students' use of social networks. In items 21 and 22, participants are asked to simply answer whether they are subscribed to social media or not, ticking "Yes" or "No," and what platforms are most used, considering "Facebook", "Instagram", "Snapchat", "Twitter", "Tik Tok", "Whatsapp" and "Youtube". The other items in this section and the rest of the questionnaire are organized in tables, in which, for each item, participants indicate their agreement on a 6-point Likert scale. This can be considered highly representative of the students' point of view, as it avoids a simple yes/no answer and offers more insight into the social media tendencies of young immigrants. They have to express their extent of agreement towards every item, choosing from the following increasing degree: "1= Never, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6=Always ". Item 23 is the first example in which participants must indicate their agreement with a question about the degree of specific social platform use, using the same options as in item 22. Item 25 had the purpose to explore on which occasions social networks seem to be mostly used: "Before School", "After School", "During school", "At the table when I eat", "In the presence of friends", "Together with friends", "Before sleep". In item 26, students have to underline if they stay awake late to use social networks.

The remaining items in this section of the questionnaire are divided into six categories that represent the social media functions available to immigrants and the characteristics analyzed in chapter 2 of this paper. This part of the questionnaire comprises 36 items.

The items of the questionnaire related to the social interaction category aim to explore how this function can be useful for immigrants to integrate, measuring the extent of social media contact with friends and family at home and people in the host country, including Italians, and the general willingness to get to know new Italian people. These factors are very important to consider, as discussed in the previous chapter, there is the tendency of immigrants to communicate more in the host country with people from the same or a similar sociocultural background, and the difficulty of making friends with host nationals.

In chapter 2, it was also stated that immigrants can feel more integrated into the society of settlement by accessing various types of information on social media, both related to their country of origin and the host country. It was underlined the vital role of weak and strong ties in finding news about the new environment and foreigners' home country. For this reason, the items associated with this social network function have the precise purpose of providing a more accurate perspective on how it can be helpful for immigrants' integration in a new sociocultural environment by analyzing their inclination to seek information about the two distinct sociocultural environments.

As discussed in chapter 2, social media offers many opportunities to participate in the host country community. In detail, it highlighted the distinctions among participatory explicit and implicit approaches.

This section aims to explore the incidence of these two methods of participating in social networks during participants' adaptation. As for the first scenario, the elements that foster more active participation will be taken into consideration, which, as was underlined in the previous chapter, were related to being productive on social media. As for the second scenario, the factors that will be considered enhance passive participation on social networks.

It will also be taken into account the production approach on social media, given that being productive, as previously mentioned, is important for immigrants' adaptation, especially for building identity. It was also discussed, in the previous chapter, the significant role that social networks can play in immigrants' process of learning a new language. It was specifically highlighted that one of the most important aspects of the use of social networks is the ability to adapt to users' different learning styles. In chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis, this aspect will be investigated to understand the linguistic strategies that could be more beneficial for the integration of young immigrants in Italy. In detail, the analysis will focus on two possible types of language learning through social media: individual language learning, which is more closely related to self-managed learning, and social language learning, which concerns the influence of participation and interaction with the host-country community.

This particular aspect of social media is necessary to consider, as previously underlined, given the negative implications that the lack of linguistic knowledge can have on communication, which is a vital element in facilitating immigrants' adaptation to the society of settlement. Another useful method highlighted to improve immigrants' language skills is the use of translation tools. This last part of the second section of the questionnaire aims to provide insight into immigrants' use of several techniques to improve language, such as automatic

translation and traditional online translation tools like Google Translate, which seems to enhance important linguistic skills like pronunciation.

3.4.4 Third section: Intercultural sensitivity

This section comprises 26 items in which students indicate their agreement on a 6-point Likert scale, based on statements related to their cross-cultural perceptions. More specifically, the items in this section have been divided into subcategories corresponding to the stages of Bennett's development model of intercultural sensitivity discussed in the first chapter: negation, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration.

The items in the first phase aim to assess participants' level of complete unawareness of the existence of other cultures and of national identities different from their own. In the second phase, the first attempt at cultural recognition will be explored, which at this point is mainly related to stereotypes and the feeling of still being superior.

Regarding the third stage, their greater acknowledgment of other cultures will be examined, associated with the consideration of cultural differences primarily based on similarities. As for the fourth phase, the results will determine their attitude towards starting to accept the existence of cultural differences and their importance. When referring to the last two stages of intercultural sensitivity, it will be concluded whether young immigrants in Italy can adapt, adopt a broader perspective on cultural differences, and integrate by fully recognizing their own and others' cultural identities.

3.5 Administration

The administration was scheduled for 23/05/2025 with students aged 14 to 19; however, to collect more data, it was decided to conduct a second administration on 12/06/2025. This time, there were only adult students.

Since the research study was conducted towards the end of the academic year and there was a need to accelerate the process, the method used to select participants to complete the questionnaire was convenience sampling. The selection is based on convenience, meaning that the participants in the research project are those who are available at the time of administration and that meet the basic criteria. This sampling technique was the optimal option for this specific study, as suggested by Golzar et al. (2022), it enables the researcher to save time because the sample is easily accessible.

3.6 Data analysis

The specific research questions that this paperwork aimed at answering were: 1) Do social networks facilitate the socio-cultural adaptation of young immigrant students within Italian society?. 2) What level of intercultural sensitivity does adolescent migrants exhibit and how does this correlate with their process of adaptation in the host country?.

To conduct a detailed analysis of the matter, Excel was used after the data was collected to summarize the findings. It was decided to organize it in columns, each containing an item from the questionnaire related to its proper category, with the participants' answers in each row. To obtain an accurate overview of the topic, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each category and its associated items.

3.7 Declaration of use of AI instruments

Nicolò Michielin, 876460, enrolled at Cà Foscari in the master's degree course (Language sciences, Educative linguistics), author of the final thesis (Influence of social networks on the process of socio-cultural adaptation of young migrants in Italy), aware of the sanctions provided by art. 76 of the consolidated law, presidential decree 28/12/2000 n.445, and of the forfeiture of benefits provided for by art.75 of the same consolidated law in the event of false or misleading declarations, under his personal responsibility to articles 46 and 47 of presidential decree 28/12/200 n. 445. The author of this final thesis declares to have used generative artificial intelligence technologies to support various aspects of the research and writing of my thesis, in particular Grammarly AI, more specifically as a guidance tool to review and optimize text, improving grammar, formality, clarity and coherence. Furthermore, he declares that all AI generated material has been carefully verified and reviewed by the thesis supervisors and by the author who assumes full responsibility for the quality, accuracy and scientific integrity of the work.

Chapter 4. Results

4.1 Social networks

4.1.1 General use

In this section of the fourth chapter of this thesis, the results of the second part of the questionnaire related to the participants' use of social networks and the associated functions (interaction, information, production, participation, learning, and use of translating instruments) are highlighted. There are important insights into the most used social networking platforms among the students who participated in the research project. What can be noticed is that the item that obtained the highest mean score is item 6 (5,14) and, on the other hand, the one that scored lower item 4 (1,5). About the standard deviation, item 3 (2,19) reached the highest level and item 4 the lowest (1,26) (See Tab. 4.1).

Tab 4.1. Social networks used

Social networks used			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	Facebook	2,05	1,5
2	Instagram	4,91	1,6
3	Snapchat	3,68	2,19
4	Twitter	1,5	1,26
5	Tik Tok	4,68	1,7
6	Whatsapp	5,14	1,28
7	Youtube	1,58	1,58

In tab 4.2, the situations in which young immigrant students most commonly use social networks are shown. In particular, what emerges is an average level of online platform use during the day (3,38), with the highest mean for item 2 (5,05) and the lowest for item 4 (1,95). In addition, the highest standard deviation is shown in item 7 (1,7) and the lowest in item 2 (1,13).

Tab 4.2 Situations of social networks use

Situations of social network use			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	Before school	3,77	1,57
2	After school	5,05	1,13
3	During school	2,59	1,4
4	At the table when I eat	1,95	1,36
5	In the presence of friends	2,41	1,26
6	Together with friends	3,14	1,46
7	Before sleep	4,77	1,7
8	Tot.	3,38	0,19

The results for the category of Staying late to use social media scored a noteworthy mean level (3,32), with a low total standard deviation of 1,73 (See Tab 4.3).

Tab 4.3 Staying up late to use social network

Staying up late to use social network			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	Do you ever stay up late to spend more time on social networking sites?	3,32	1,73

4.1.2 Interaction and information

Promising results related to the social interaction category of the questionnaire are shown (See Tab 4.4). The cumulative mean is 3.75, with the highest mean in item 2 (4,59) and the lowest in item 5 (3,40). As for the standard deviation, low results can be observed (0, 19). In item 1, the highest DS score (1,97), whereas the participants' response to item 2 was the lowest in this category (1,50).

Tab 4.4 Interaction

Interaction			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I communicate with friends in my home country	3,5	1,97
2	I communicate with friends from my country in Italy	4,59	1,50
3	I communicate with Italian friends	3,81	1,81
4	I look forward and get to know new Italian people	3,45	1,92
5	I am constantly connected with anyone and at any time	3,40	1,65
	Tot.	3,75	0,19

Taking into account the information function of social media, as represented in Tab 4.5, it is notable a general positive approach towards this category. As a matter of fact, the total results in relation to mean and standard deviation are 3,98 and 0,24. In detail, the higher average is associated with item 3 (4,91) and lower with item 2 (3,05). About the standard deviation, item 5 reached the highest level (2,07) while item 2 appears to have reached the lowest (1,46).

Tab 4.5 Information

Information			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I am up to date on the news from my home country	3,59	1,59
2	I am up to date on the news in Italy	3,05	1,46

3	I follow the music of my home country	4,91	1,63
4	I follow Italian music	4,77	1,57
5	I follow the fashion of my home country	3,73	2,07
6	I follow italian fashion	3,86	1,96
	Tot.	3,98	0,24

4.1.3 Production and participation

The results for the production category are very low (See Tab 4.6). The total mean and standard deviation are respectively 2,22 and 0,11. The more significant outcomes are in item 3, for both mean (2,68) and standard deviation (1,49). Item 4 highlights the less significant outcomes for this specific category in both cases (mean: 1,86 and standard deviation: 1,25).

Tab 4.6 Production

Production			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I regularly post on my profile	2,41	1,47
2	I share interesting news and updates on my page	2,09	1,31
3	I regularly upload photos or brief vides to my profile	2,68	1,49
4	I actively participate in discussions on other people's posts	1,86	1,25
5	I do live streams to communicate in real time with my friends	2,05	1,29
	Tot.	2,22	0,11

Positive results are underlined for the participation category (See Tab 4.7). The total mean registered is 3,18, with the highest level in item 7 (3,95). As for the standard deviation, even in this case it is not very high, at only 0,18, with item 2 being the most influential (1,96) and item 1 the least influential (1,36).

Tab 4.7 Participation

Participation			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I have participated in italian cultural events (es. Carnival of Venice)	2,05	1,36
2	I tried to cook Italian dishes following video recipes	3,27	1,96
3	I discovered Italian traditions	3,68	1,7
4	I took online lessons on Italian culture	2,73	1,7
5	I've communicated in Italian groups	2,82	1,65
6	I tried to get to know famous Italian places	3,77	1,77
7	I communicated my Italian experiences with friends in my home country	3,95	1,7
	Tot.	3,18	0,18

4.1.4 Language learning and use of translating instruments

Tab 4.8 shows the low results for the individual language learning category. The overall average and standard deviation are precisely 2,79 and 0,13. The highest mean is observed for item 4 in both the first scenario (3) and the second (1,98). As for the lowest, they need to be underlined: item 1 for the mean (2,59) and item 3 for the standard deviation (1,67).

Tab 4.8 Individual language learning

Individual language learning			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I follow videos of Italian teachers on social networks to improve the language	2,59	1,82
2	I watch videos in Italian to listen to the spoken language	2,9	1,97
3	I pay attention to Italian grammar while watching videos	2,68	1,67
4	I pay attention to the Italian accent while watching videos	3	1,98
5	I use tests in Italian to assess my level of knowledge	2,77	1,95

	Tot.	2,79	0,13
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As for the results for the social language learning category (See Tab 4.9), compared with individual language learning, they are even lower, taking into account the total average (2,31) and a similar standard deviation (0,15). Item 2 has the highest score for the average (2,64), while, item 5 for the standard deviation (1,89). Regarding the lowest in the first case, items 1, 3, and 4 are at the same level, which is 2,14. On the other hand, for the standard deviation, item 4 (1.46).

Tab 4.9 Social language learning

Social language learning			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I participate in groups to learn Italian on social networks	2,14	1,75
2	I share posts in Italian in social networks groups	2,64	1,76
3	I use chat on social networks to improve Italian	2,14	1,64
4	I accept proposals from social network to learn Italian	2,14	1,46
5	I ask Italian students for friendships through social networks	2,32	1,89
6	I accept friend requests from Italian students on social networks	2,5	1,79
	Tot.	2,31	0,15

The questionnaire data revealed worrying outcomes about the use of translating instruments (See Tab 4.10). The total results referring to the average and standard deviation are 2,18 and 0,27. The highest levels are those related to item 1: mean (2,45), standard deviation (1,92).

Tab 4.10 Use of translating instruments

Use of translating instruments			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I use automatic translation to read posts in Italian	2,45	1,92
2	I use translation tools before sharing posts in Italian	1,9	1,54
	Tot.	2,18	0,27

4.2 Intercultural sensitivity

4.2.1 First stages: Negation and Defense

This section of the chapter presents the results of the third section of the questionnaire, which relate to the cross-cultural stages of Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity (Negation, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration). Tab 4.11 shows positive outcomes, as the results for the intercultural sensitivity (negation) category are not very high. The overall scores for the two variables appear to be 2,67 for the first and 0,45 for the second. Item 1 obtained the highest average (3,41), while item 4 the lowest (1,5). The highest score associated with the standard deviation is item 2 (1,52), and the lowest with item 3 (1,04).

Tab 4.11 Negation

Intercultural sensitivity (Negation)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	People from the same culture as me behave in the only way that's ok	3,41	1,14
2	I often feel that people in Italy are rude to me	2,86	1,52
3	I don't care what happens in other parts of the world	2,9	1,04
4	Living in Italy makes me feel uncomfortable	1,5	1,06
	Tot.	2,67	0,45

More negative results are highlighted for the Intercultural sensitivity (Defense) category (See Tab 4.12). There seems to be a higher tendency for young immigrants to act defensively, with a total of 3,39 (Mean) and 0,31 (Standard deviation). Item 6 is the one that registered the highest mean (4,72) but the lowest standard deviation (1,07). The latter scored higher with item 4,

while, considering the lowest outcomes in terms of mean it is necessary to mention item 3 (2,14).

Tab 4.12 Defense

Intercultural sensitivity (Defense)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	There are people from other countries who are bullies	2,86	1,56
2	I divide the students at my school between “Us” and “Them”	2,59	1,84
3	I hate people from other cultures or countries	2,14	1,67
4	There are behaviors of people here that I can’t stand	4,05	2,01
5	I’m ashamed of people of my country when I’m in Italy	4,5	1,92
6	I would definitely emigrate to another culture other than Italy	4,72	1,07
7	I don’t value the culture of my home country	2,86	1,7
	Tot.	3,39	0,31

4.2.2 Other stages: Minimization and Acceptance

There seem to be more positive results for the intercultural sensitivity (Minimization) category (See Tab 4.13). The result in relation to mean was in fact (2,86) with a low standard deviation (0,33). It is evident that item 4 revealed the highest level of both mean (3,73) and standard deviation (1,96). Furthermore, in terms of mean item 2 is the lowest (2,09) while in terms of standard deviation the third (1,17).

Tab 4.13 Minimization

Intercultural sensitivity (Minimization)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	People all over the world want and need the same things	2,59	1,71
2	All people approach problems in the same way	2,09	1,7
3	Conflicts between different nations can be resolved according to the same morality	2,32	1,17
4	There are cultural differences between different cultures, but basically all people are the same	3,73	1,96
	Tot.	2,86	0,33

The results are promising for the intercultural sensitivity (Acceptance) category (See Tab 4.14). In this case, the more significant items are item 4 (4,14), if we consider the mean, and item 3 (1,76) when referring to standard deviation. On the contrary, the least influential in relation to the first and the second scenario appear to be item 1 (3,77) and item 2 (1,38). The overall outcome for the first variable is 3,94 and 0,17 for the second one.

Tab 4.14 Acceptance

Intercultural sensitivity (Acceptance)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	People from different cultures may not understand each other because of different ways of expressing themselves	3,77	1,66
2	Different behaviors make me see things in a new way	3,9	1,38
3	Understanding different cultures helps me recognize the value of different things	3,96	1,76

4	The more I learn about different cultures, the more I am able to recognize the differences between them	4,14	1,73
	Tot.	3,94	0,17

4.2.3 Last stages: Adaptation and Integration

Positive outcomes regarding participants' cultural openness are evident from tabs 4.15 and 4.16 that show the results for the categories related to the two last stages of intercultural sensitivity (adaptation and integration). Particularly significant is the first section, with a higher cumulative mean (4,68) than the second (3,54). The participants' responses to item 3 for adaptation (5,4) and item 2 for integration (3,82) are the highest in this category in terms of mean. On the contrary the lowest are item 1 in the first case (4,09) and item 3 in the second (3,36). There is not much variation, taking into consideration the standard deviation, with scores of 0,14 (Adaptation) and 0,20 (Integration). The highest standard deviation values are observed for item 1 for adaptation (1,54) and item 3 for integration (1,97), while, the lowest for item 3 (1,22) in the first scenario and item 2 in the second (1,59).

Tab 4.15 Adaptation

Intercultural sensitivity (Adaptation)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I am able to put myself in the shoes of a person from another culture	4,09	1,54
2	My compatriots try to adapt in Italy and I try to do it too	4,28	1,35
3	It's normal for people to be different	5,4	1,22
4	I have adapted to living in Italy, but I continue to follow my values	4,95	1,33
	Tot.	4,68	0,14

Figure 4.16 Integration

Intercultural sensitivity (Integration)			
Number of respondents: 22			
	Item	Mean	DS
1	I feel part of more than one culture	3,45	1,65
2	I am able to evaluate a situation using different cultural points of view	3,82	1,59
3	I would like to be a cultural mediator to help people who migrate here	3,36	1,97
	Tot.	3,54	0,20

Chapter 5. Discussion, conclusions, limitations and future research

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 General use of social networks

The results of the first part of the second section of the questionnaire refer to the general use of social networks, aiming to investigate the participants' most-used social media platforms and the situations in which they are used. In the first scenario, it seems that WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok are the apps that young immigrants in Italy spend the most time using for online activities. Twitter and Facebook are less influential. Particularly significant data can be observed regarding the use of YouTube, for which a higher score could have been expected, given the diversified content this platform offers.

Taking into account the second scenario outcomes suggest that social networks are mostly used by young foreigners outside of the classroom, especially after school, before sleep and before school. Notably, they also prefer to use them not alone, in the presence of friends, but more often together with them, highlighting social media as a possible way of bonding and providing different content to engage and discuss with peers. In addition, it appears to be very common for immigrants to stay up late using social media.

5.1.2 Interaction and information

Based on the results for the interaction category, the findings may indicate this function of social media to be helpful for immigrants' integration into the host society by allowing them to maintain contact with both the host country and the country of origin. The results confirm in part the considerations made in chapter two related to this function of social media (See section 2.3), particularly associated with Bezulska's article (2026), with the outcomes of the research study that was conducted to analyze the role of social media in allowing internal and international foreigners in Poland to maintain their social relationships with the country-of-origin community while also building new social relationships with the society of settlement. It can be highlighted that there is greater closeness in interactions with people who belong to the society of settlement, compared with those who live in the country of origin. However, Bezulska (2026) underlined the difficulty for immigrants in making new host-national friends

and the tendency to interact in Italy with people from the same socio-cultural background. This factor is evident in this case study, as the participants highlighted that in Italy they prefer communicating with friends in Italy that come from their home country rather than with Italian friends and suggesting that they are less likely to look forward to getting to know new Italian people. The outcomes outline what was stated in section 2.3 about the difficulty for immigrants in building new social relationships with the host-country community and the fact that strong social ties include other foreigners, while weak ones include host nationals.

However, there is no significant difference in social contact with the societies of origin and settlement, nor in strong or weak ties, which highlights no worrying issues and underscores the importance of this function in enhancing integration in the host society.

Still, a positive approach is evident when referring to the information function of social media; even in this scenario, online platforms appear to foster immigrants' integration into the new society. It was indicated in chapter 2 (See section 2.3) that Hagg et al. (2018) highlight that social media allows users to reach global information. This aspect is evident in the questionnaire results, as respondents stated that they use social networks to access information related to both their country of origin and their society of settlement.

There is a difference in immigrants' inclination to seek information about the two countries that should be considered to gain a more detailed perspective on the matter; however, it is not very influential. When referring to the news, there is a tendency to relate more to home-country news than to host-country news. The same can be noticed with music news. The first element confirms the strong familiarity and emotional attachment that immigrants show to what happens in their country of origin, an aspect that was underlined by Valgas et al. (2025). The latter was predictable based on the details provided by participants in the general information section of the questionnaire, in which they specifically named famous people from their country of origin as their favorite singers.

In addition, there is also greater interest in finding information from their home country associated with music rather than general news, which could have been expected due to the young age of immigrants. The only element that contrasts with these considerations is that participants are less interested in fashion news associated with the country of origin and more interested in Italians.

5.1.3 participation and production

The production function of social media is one of the categories of the questionnaire that obtained the lowest results. On these platforms, immigrants don't regularly share posts, photos or videos. More specifically, the analysis of the items related to this section underlines the fact that immigrants are not actively productive on social media. What can be noticed, in fact, is that the outcomes of the participative aspects associated with more active production on social media, which refers to actively participating in other people's posts were the outcomes of this function of the questionnaire that reached the lowest mean levels. In this matter they need to be taken into consideration the points indicated by Torres (2024) and discussed in section 2.5 about the fact that identity is shaped by interpersonal factors. It was highlighted that the latter includes all the online encounters that can be effective on how individuals perceive themselves and the rest of the world, which is a very important factor of personal identity. Creating content on social platforms is an important element of integration as it allows immigrants to construct and discover different aspects of themselves because of more interactivity with the digital world and more specifically confronting comparisons with influencers and the feedback given by other users to the content created. Not taking productive actions on social media can be a crucial issue for the process of adaptation of immigrants, precisely because of the lack of interactivity with the digital world that could shape significantly the concept of their personal identity. Regarding the use of social networks as a tool to participate in the host country the respondents' approach seems to be more positive. In section 2.5 was indicated that Seifert et al (2018) recognize the existence of two types of possible participation, explicit and implicit. The first type of participation involves active production on social media and should be the more effective method to enhance participation while the second a more passive approach which could be finding information or participating to cultural events. Taking into account the explicit approach, the productive action on social media in this case study seems to be partly beneficial to enhance participation. As a matter of fact, the findings may indicate that immigrants participate being productive but mostly by communicating in Italy with friends from their home country and less in Italian groups. This aspect outlines similar outcomes with respect to the discussion made for interaction function, when referring to the tendency of participants to communicate with people that belong to the same socio-cultural backgrounds and showing more difficulty in making new host natives' friends. It needs to be mentioned that in this case the issue can be considered even more crucial as the mean level for the item related to immigrants participating by communicating in groups didn't even reach the average level. In

chapter two was suggested that on social media there is more possibility for users to engage in implicit participation which, despite less interactivity with the world online, is still relevant to get to know new people, cultural characteristics or to practice language. The results of the questionnaire suggest, in fact, this type of participation on social media to be more influential, being particularly useful for trying to get to know famous Italian places, discovering Italian traditions and trying to cook Italian dishes following video recipes. It needs also to be highlighted the significance of participating through learning cultural characteristics of the host country. As discussed in section 2.5 this element of implicit participation was indicated, by Erdem (2018), to have a connection with increasing interaction on social media and facilitating communication, helping immigrants to adapt. In this scenario, it seems to be only in part beneficial, as there is a high level of respondents' participation through discovery of Italian cultural traditions but not corresponded with communication in Italian groups, item that obtained low results. The most worrying result that data revealed for this category was the participation in Italian cultural events.

5.1.4 Language learning and translating instruments

In section 2.4, it was underlined that immigrants have complete autonomy and control over the process of learning a new language informally through social media (Haque, 2020), and the consideration made by Mendes et al. (2024) related to how social networks, with the many features provided, can satisfy the preferred learning method by users, whether to be individual or social. Despite this, the data collected for this research study showed that not only were the results for this category of the questionnaire very low, but there also seemed to be no particular difference in the influence of the two techniques for learning a new language. It is nevertheless necessary to consider data showing that they use social media more often to learn Italian individually, especially by watching videos in Italian to listen to the spoken language and pay attention to the accent. Immigrants not learning individually do not have the opportunity to highly increase their communication and social skills. It was stated in chapter 2 to be relevant to help immigrants improve their linguistic skills, due to the presence of online teachers and having the opportunity to acquire the use of the target language in real-life situations by observing host nationals' content on social media, important linguistic elements that in this case study did not show any particular significance in the process of integration of the participants. Even lower results are shown for social language learning, highlighting the lack of influence in

this function of participation and interaction, which were underlined to be important elements to foster this type of language learning, receiving feedback from other users, and more specifically, as indicated by Tulenova (2024), to acquire vocabulary, writing, and speaking skills. The same can be said for the use of translation tools, for which better scores were expected, given the relevance of using many online translation tools to learn important linguistic elements like pronunciation.

Usually, as discussed in chapter 2, the limited influence of the linguistic function of social media can be a serious issue for immigrants' integration in the country of settlement, as it is a basic element that facilitates communication. In this case, considering that social media does not seem beneficial for immigrants as a method of language learning, and that it remains a positive approach to communication in the host country, it can be suggested traditional language learning to be more effective in increasing their linguistic skills.

5.1.5 Intercultural sensitivity

Taking into account immigrants' levels of intercultural sensitivity, the data highlighted even better outcomes than predicted. It could have been expected to have a low level of intercultural sensitivity because of the following reasons. The first would have been a lack of experience due to their young age and their short time living in a different country. The second could have been connected to what was mentioned in previous sections about influencers on social media who could be problematic for foreigners, mainly because they may give an inaccurate, linear interpretation of other countries and prevent immigrants from building a more multicultural identity (Mabere et al., 2023). However, these aspects were probably not very influential in young immigrants' intercultural sensitivity, and, by analyzing the general positive outcomes, the possible interpretation is that more specifically social networks seem to have played an important role in helping them recognize and respect the value of other national identities, which is a very important aspect when referring to being willing to adapt to a socio cultural environment with different habits and.

In chapter 1 of this thesis, it was noted (See section 1.3) that Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity comprises the following stages: negation, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. Bennett (2017) highlights that, in the first stage, immigrants are unable to recognize the existence of other cultures. In this case study, the incidence in the first

stage (negation) is low, suggesting a positive attitude towards the new socio-cultural environment and a general awareness of the existence of people from other cultures. In particular, young immigrants seem to feel comfortable living in Italy and do not perceive Italians as rude to them, not highlighting in this phase any significant hate of immigrants towards people that come from different cultural backgrounds. However, it is shown that some respondents are not very open to the many ways other immigrants can behave and think there is only one acceptable way to behave. The outcomes from the second stage indicate a higher number of migrants adopting a defensive approach. This phase of intercultural sensitivity is described by Bennett (2017) as characterized by a greater recognition of other cultures among immigrants, but is associated with stereotypes and feelings of superiority. Immigrants acting more defensively could be considered more concerning for the process of adaptation and it is particularly evident in the case study, taking into account the fact that despite feeling comfortable living in Italy, many stated that they would definitely migrate to another country, which is probably due to many participants declaring that there are many behaviors of Italian people that they cannot stand. The most positive aspect is that respondents emphasize that they do not divide the students at their school between "Us" and "Them", indicating no sense of superiority.

Taking into account the minimization phase of intercultural sensitivity, in section 1.3, it was suggested that in this stage, despite a higher recognition of other national identities, usually people from different countries can still be perceived as all the same. The results of this stage are generally positive, as immigrants show awareness of different moralities and approaches to problem-solving across nations, with the only negative aspect being the failure to perceive people as different. However, this does not need to be considered an issue, given the considerations related to the other stages of intercultural sensitivity. The acceptance category, in fact, reached a better score, highlighting that there is a higher percentage of immigrants who are aware of the importance of learning and accepting the differences that characterize other cultures and that the more they learn about different cultures, the more they can recognize the differences between them and the value of different things. These aspects play an important role in immigrants' ways of thinking, as many of them affirmed that different behaviors make them see things in a new way.

Bennett (2017) highlights immigrants' ability during the adaptation phase to shift more freely between cultures, which is notable in this case study, as participants can put themselves in the shoes of people from different cultures. Furthermore, it can be said that young immigrants in Italy show a tendency to act defensively towards the new socio-cultural environment but they

seem to have generally succeeded in adapting because of two other factors. The first one is associated with a larger number of them believing in the existence of people's differences. The second relates to a significant element for the adaptation process that was discussed in chapter 1 and that refers to immigrants needing to maintain connections to both national identities, which is evident even in this scenario. In fact, despite having adapted to the host country, immigrants continue to follow their values. As for the last stage, in chapter 1, it was highlighted as the phase in which immigrants should have a higher level of intercultural sensitivity, having the ability to be open to the existence and differences of other cultures. Despite the lower results in terms of adaptation, the participants appeared to have gained these cultural skills, as they value people from different countries and their perspectives.

5.2 Conclusions, limitations and future research

The results of the questionnaire suggest that the use of social media functions can be useful for young immigrants in Italy to facilitate their integration, primarily as a means of interaction, a source of information, and a way to foster implicit participation. Many aspects of social media and immigrants highlighted in previous chapters were notable in the case study of this thesis. About interaction, the discussion of the results underlined the points made by Bezulska (2026) related to the importance of social media as a tool of communication with both the members of the home country and host country communities with, however, the tendency of immigrants to communicate in Italy more with people that come from similar socio-cultural backgrounds (strong ties) and the difficulty to make friends with host natives (weak ties).

As for information outcomes, the study confirmed that social networks enable users to find global information (Hagg et al., 2018). Immigrants' integration appears to be facilitated by accessing both news related to the host country and the home country, highlighting, in addition, a stronger need to find information associated with the latter, which Valgas et al. (2025) underlined as relevant to them due to emotional and familial attachment.

The outcomes associated with the participation function of social media align with the considerations made by Lieberman et al. (2020), who note that, on social media, interaction with the digital world is less than in real-life contexts. In fact, the online activities that implied more implicit participation were the ones that, in the case study, appeared to be more effective for their adaptation process. Implicit participation can be considered significant in the process of immigrants' adaptation, as it remains necessary for them to better integrate into the new socio-cultural environment, creating opportunities for enhancing social, linguistic, and cultural

awareness. However, as stated in section 2.5, it is important to participate in real-life participatory situations to foster a more active sense of engagement in the host country community.

Despite the positive aspects of the social media functions just mentioned for the integration of young immigrants in Italy, the other functions did not yield comparable results. As a matter of fact, the participants do not seem to be very productive on social networks, which could be a crucial issue, as the interpersonal relations that involve productive actions on these platforms are the ones specifically indicated by Torres (2024) as significant in shaping individual personal identity. The results also may indicate that learning the Italian language through social media was not effective for immigrants, neither individually nor socially, which was not predicted, given that, as highlighted by Mendes et al. (2024), the many traits of social media should satisfy different preferred learning styles. Given the focal point made by Adeyeye (2024) about the fact that language barriers could be negative for effective communication and integration, and the low level of language learning on social media compared with the high level of social interaction with the host country community, the possible interpretation was that traditional method of language learning could be more beneficial for young immigrants in Italy as a form of acculturation with respect to digital language learning.

Referring to the third section of the questionnaire, the outcomes suggest a tendency to act defensively but a general attitude towards the advanced stages of intercultural sensitivity. In fact, despite some participants indicating that they don't stand certain Italian people behaviors and wishing to migrate to another country, they seem to have generally been able to adapt to and integrate into the Italian socio-cultural environment, more specifically showing cultural awareness and an interest in understanding and respecting cultural differences. As underlined in chapter 2 Mabere et al. (2023) suggested that it can be very common for social media users to be closed minded in terms of cultural understanding because of the creation of the "echo chamber", which is a term usually adopted to indicate a context in which the information shared is meant to confirm the preexisting perspective on the matter which can be possible because of the presence of influencers and the algorithm. However, given the positive results towards intercultural sensitivity in this case study, it can be suggested that social media supposedly did not negatively affect immigrants' awareness and respect for other cultures.

This research study has provided important insights into how social networks can be useful in the adaptation process of immigrants and their general attitude towards intercultural sensitivity, while also highlighting the difficulties; however, it has limitations that are more specifically related to the sample. As mentioned in chapter 3, the convenience sample and the descriptive

analysis were chosen because, as the research study was being conducted towards the end of the academic year, there was a need to save time and find participants who were available at the moment of administration. Due to the facts of the research project not being very large and not being able to benefit from an inferential analysis, the results on the topic are not fully representative of the totality of the immigrant population in Italy. Furthermore, the outcomes do not fully reflect immigrants' use of social networks because they were limited to the age range of young male and female students aged 14 to 19. Future research could rely on a larger sample, including more people from each country and a broader age range, to observe potential differences and gain a wider, more accurate perspective on the matter. In addition, a limitation of this study is that it did not take into account gender and age in detail, with the aim of examining differences in the use of social networks by immigrants based on these factors. To conclude, future studies could also focus specifically on these two elements, which are necessary to increase awareness of the potential relevance of online platforms as a means of acculturation and adaptation.

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