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Social Media and Changing Cultural Practices in Rural Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

The expansion of digital connectivity and smartphone use has transformed social interaction, cultural expression and identity formation in rural India. This study examines the relationship between social media use and changing cultural practices among rural youth in Himachal Pradesh. Adopting a mixed-method design, it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Primary data were collected from 120 respondents aged 15–30 years, with equal representation of male and female respondents, selected purposively from one rural area in each district of Himachal Pradesh. The study examines Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat and explores perceptions of cultural preservation, transformation, local identity and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

The findings indicate that social media has become an integral part of the everyday cultural life of rural youth in Himachal Pradesh. Digital platforms are increasingly shaping cultural engagement, particularly in relation to music, entertainment, dress, language, food habits and the representation of festivals and traditions. At the same time, social media provides new opportunities for documenting, sharing and promoting local cultural practices, thereby strengthening cultural awareness and facilitating new forms of intergenerational cultural transmission. The study suggests that digitalisation does not necessarily result in the displacement of traditional culture; rather, it creates a dynamic space in which cultural practices are selectively retained, modified, represented and reinterpreted. Rural youth negotiate inherited traditions alongside contemporary cultural influences encountered through digital media, producing new forms of cultural expression and identity. The study therefore conceptualises social media as both a medium of cultural transformation and a mechanism of cultural continuity, contributing to an ongoing process of cultural adaptation and hybridisation in rural Himachal Pradesh.

Keywords: Social Media; Rural Youth; Cultural Change; Cultural Practices; Himachal Pradesh; Cultural Identity; Cultural Preservation; Cultural Hybridisation; Digitalisation; Intergenerational Transmission.

Introduction

Social media has emerged as one of the most significant forces reshaping everyday

social and cultural life in contemporary India. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have moved beyond their earlier role as channels of interpersonal communication and have increasingly become spaces for cultural expression, social interaction, knowledge exchange and identity formation. This transformation is particularly significant in rural societies, where digital technologies intersect with established forms of community life, kinship, customary practices and oral traditions. Rather than simply replacing older cultural forms, digital media can become incorporated into existing communication systems and alter the ways in which people maintain relationships, circulate information and negotiate social change (Tenhunen, 2008). Thus, the study of social media in rural India requires attention not only to technological adoption but also to the cultural processes through which technology becomes embedded in everyday life.

Himachal Pradesh provides a particularly important setting for examining this relationship between digitalisation and cultural change. According to the Government of Himachal Pradesh, 6.18 million of the state's 6.86 million people lived in rural areas according to the 2011 Census, indicating the predominantly rural character of the state. The state also recorded a literacy rate of 82.80 per cent in 2011, with female literacy reaching 75.93 per cent (Government of Himachal Pradesh, n.d.). The combination of a predominantly rural population, relatively high literacy, difficult mountain terrain and dispersed settlements makes Himachal Pradesh a distinctive context for studying the social consequences of digital connectivity. Rural communities in the state are simultaneously embedded in longstanding cultural traditions and increasingly connected to wider national and global cultural flows.

The cultural diversity of Himachal Pradesh is reflected in its numerous local customs, festivals, religious practices, dialects, folk songs, dances, traditional foods, dress and community institutions. These practices have historically been transmitted through family, village institutions, ritual participation and oral traditions. For example, research on the Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur demonstrates the continued importance of customs and traditions associated with different stages of the life cycle and their transmission across generations (Verma & Sharma, 2020). Similarly, studies of Kinnaur show that festivals such as Fulaich are deeply embedded in local ecological knowledge, ritual practices and community identity (Lata et al., 2024). Such traditions, however, do not exist outside processes of social change. Education, migration, tourism, improved transportation, changing occupations and digital communication have progressively altered the social environment in which these practices are reproduced.

The expansion of digital communication is particularly important in this context. Thakur and Chander's (2018) empirical study of social media use among farmers in Himachal Pradesh demonstrated that Facebook and WhatsApp could facilitate information sharing, networking and communication across geographical distances. Their study involved 96 farmers from eight districts and found that social media could support the circulation of text, photographs and audio-visual information within rural communities. Although their study focused on agricultural extension rather than culture, its significance for the present research lies in demonstrating that social media has already entered rural communication practices in Himachal Pradesh. The implications therefore extend beyond agriculture: once digital platforms become part of everyday communication, they also provide new channels through which cultural meanings, practices, memories and identities can circulate.

Recent research further demonstrates that digital participation in Himachal Pradesh is uneven. Behl and Kapoor (2025), in a mixed-method study involving 500 respondents across rural and urban areas, found substantial geographical differences in internet

accessibility and usage, with mobile devices serving as the principal gateway to digital services. Age, education and income were also identified as important determinants of digital engagement. The study's findings are particularly relevant to cultural research because they caution against treating rural society as digitally homogeneous. Cultural change mediated through social media is likely to differ according to age, gender, education, socioeconomic position and geographical accessibility. The authors further identify geographical location as a major determinant of the quality of digital engagement and highlight the existence of distinct zones of digital inclusion and exclusion within the state.

The cultural implications of social media can also be understood through the broader transformation of rural economies and tourism. Rural tourism in Himachal Pradesh increasingly draws upon local culture, traditional food, handicrafts, folk performances, festivals and village experiences. Yadav et al. (2024) note that the commercialization of local culture through tourism can contribute to the erosion of customs and values when community participation and cultural sustainability are neglected. At the same time, the authors recognise the potential of e-marketing and digital promotion to highlight distinctive regional identities and rural cultural resources. Social media therefore forms part of a larger process in which culture is increasingly made visible to audiences beyond the village itself.

This visibility produces an important cultural paradox. On the one hand, social media exposes rural populations, particularly younger generations, to urban lifestyles, consumer cultures, new fashions, changing ideas about marriage and family and broader global cultural trends. Research on digital media and rural communities elsewhere in India suggests that new media can contribute to shifts in cultural orientation among younger populations (Das & Singh, 2022). On the other hand, digital platforms can also provide opportunities to document, circulate and revive local traditions. Contemporary research on rural creator cultures in India demonstrates that village-based creators are increasingly producing digital narratives that bring local cultural experiences to wider audiences (Nayaka et al., 2025). This suggests that digitalisation does not necessarily mean the disappearance of rural culture; instead, it can transform the forms through which culture is performed, represented and consumed.

The central issue, therefore, is not whether social media is “destroying” or “preserving” rural culture, but how cultural practices are being renegotiated through digital spaces. A wedding photograph, a traditional dress, a folk song, a village festival or a religious ritual may retain its cultural meaning while simultaneously becoming digital content. Similarly, a practice that was once transmitted orally may now be recorded and circulated through WhatsApp or YouTube. This process can strengthen cultural visibility and intergenerational awareness, but it may also encourage selective representation, commodification and changes in the meaning of cultural practices.

Despite the growing literature on digital behaviour, rural communication and cultural tourism in Himachal Pradesh, a significant gap remains. Existing studies have examined internet adoption, social media use for agricultural communication, digital divides and the role of culture in rural tourism, but relatively limited attention has been devoted to the direct relationship between social media and everyday cultural practices in rural Himachal Pradesh. In particular, there is a need to examine how digital platforms are influencing festivals, marriage practices, dress, food, folk music and dance, religious practices, language, family relations and the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

Against this background, the present study examines social media and changing

cultural practices in rural Himachal Pradesh. It approaches cultural change as a dynamic process involving continuity, adaptation, selective adoption, reinterpretation and, in some cases, commercialization. The study particularly seeks to understand how rural communities negotiate the relationship between inherited traditions and contemporary digital influences. In doing so, it argues that social media should be understood not merely as a technological innovation but as a new cultural space in which rural identities are increasingly performed, negotiated, preserved and transformed.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of social media on changing cultural practices in rural Himachal Pradesh. The use of both approaches is intended to provide a broader understanding of cultural change by combining measurable patterns of social-media use with the experiences, perceptions and interpretations of young people. The quantitative component focuses on patterns of social-media access, frequency of use, preferred platforms and respondents' perceptions of changes in cultural practices, whereas the qualitative component explores how young people understand and experience the transformation, continuity and reinterpretation of local traditions in their everyday lives.

The study covers selected rural areas across all twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select one rural study area from each district, taking into consideration geographical and cultural diversity. The selected areas are Bharmaur in Chamba district, Spiti in Lahaul and Spiti, Pooh in Kinnaur, Shillai in Sirmour, Bijhari in Hamirpur, Haroli in Una, Dharampur in Solan, Palampur in Kangra, Jhanduta in Bilaspur, Rohru in Shimla, Nirmand in Kullu and Karsog in Mandi. A total sample of 120 respondents is selected for the study, with 10 respondents from each selected area. To maintain gender balance, the sample consists of 60 male and 60 female respondents. The respondents belong to the 15–30 years age group, thereby focusing particularly on rural youth, who constitute an important section of social-media users and are likely to experience and negotiate cultural change more directly. The educational background of respondents ranges from Class 8th to postgraduate level, allowing the study to include respondents with different levels of educational attainment.

The study focuses on the use of four major social-media platforms, namely Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat. These platforms are examined in relation to the ways in which young people access, consume, create and share cultural content. The questionnaire collects quantitative information regarding respondents' demographic characteristics, educational background, social-media access, preferred platforms, frequency and duration of use, purposes of social-media engagement and perceptions of cultural change. Particular attention is given to whether respondents use social media for entertainment, communication, information, cultural expression, learning about local traditions, sharing photographs and videos of cultural events, and maintaining connections with family and community members.

The qualitative component is based on semi-structured questions and open-ended responses designed to understand respondents' perceptions of changing cultural practices. The study examines cultural changes in areas such as traditional festivals and fairs, marriage and wedding practices, dress and fashion, food habits, folk music and dance, religious and ritual practices, local language and forms of communication, family relationships and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge. Respondents are also encouraged to express whether they perceive social media as

contributing to the preservation and promotion of local culture or as encouraging the adoption of urban, national and global cultural influences. This approach recognises that cultural change is not necessarily a linear movement from tradition to modernity; rather, traditional practices may be selectively retained, modified, represented and reinterpreted through digital platforms.

The quantitative data are analysed through frequency, percentage and comparative analysis. Comparisons are made across the selected rural locations and, where relevant, between male and female respondents and different educational groups within the 15–30 age category. The analysis also examines differences in the use of Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat and their perceived relationship with cultural change. Qualitative responses are analysed thematically by identifying recurring themes such as cultural transformation, cultural continuity, cultural identity, youth and modernity, preservation of traditions, changing lifestyles, intergenerational differences and cultural commercialisation. The findings from both components are integrated to develop a comprehensive interpretation of the relationship between social-media use and cultural practices.

The study is further supported by secondary sources, including peer-reviewed research articles, books, government reports, Census publications, policy documents and previous studies relating to social media, rural society, digitalisation and Himachali culture. Earlier research has demonstrated the increasing significance of Facebook and WhatsApp in rural communication and networking in Himachal Pradesh (Thakur & Chander, 2018), while recent research has highlighted variations in digital engagement according to geographical and demographic characteristics (Behl & Kapoor, 2025). The existing literature is used to contextualise and interpret the primary evidence generated through the present study. Given the purposive nature of the sample and the selection of only ten respondents from each study location, the findings are not intended to be statistically representative of all rural youth in Himachal Pradesh. Rather, the study provides a comparative and exploratory understanding of how social media is influencing the continuity, transformation, representation and reinterpretation of cultural practices among rural youth across different regions of the state.

Results and Discussion

Social Media Use among Rural Youth

The primary survey of 120 rural youth respondents in Himachal Pradesh provides the principal empirical basis for examining the relationship between social media and cultural transformation. The survey data indicate that social media has become an important component of everyday life among rural youth. The equal representation of male and female respondents provides a balanced basis for examining perceptions of digital engagement and cultural change.

The significance of the primary evidence lies not merely in establishing whether respondents use social media, but in understanding how they perceive its influence on their cultural life. The responses concerning platform preference, frequency of use, cultural preservation, changing practices, local identity and intergenerational transmission collectively demonstrate that social media operates simultaneously as a medium of cultural exposure and a mechanism of cultural reproduction.

Previous studies are useful mainly for contextualising these findings. Thakur and Chander (2018), for example, demonstrated the usefulness of social media for communication and information exchange among rural users in Himachal Pradesh. Similarly, Behl and Kapoor (2025) identified demographic and geographical variations

in digital engagement in the state. However, the present study differs from these works by placing cultural practices and perceptions of rural youth at the centre of analysis.

Thus, the subsequent analysis relies primarily on the responses obtained through the field survey, while secondary literature is used only to compare and contextualise the primary findings.

Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Table 1. Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	60	50
Female	60	50
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation

The primary survey consists of an equal number of male and female respondents, with each group accounting for 50% of the total sample. This balanced distribution strengthens the descriptive value of the survey because the findings are not disproportionately represented by either gender.

More importantly, the balanced sample allows the study to examine social media as a cultural phenomenon experienced by both male and female rural youth. The data therefore provide an appropriate foundation for understanding broader patterns of cultural exposure, preservation and transformation.

The present finding should be treated primarily as a sample characteristic derived from the field survey, rather than as evidence that gender has no influence on social-media behaviour. Any gender-specific differences would require separate cross-tabulation and analysis of the responses.

Preferred Social-Media Platforms

Table 2. Primary Social-Media Platform Used by Respondents

Platform	Frequency	Percentage
YouTube	42	35
Instagram	36	30
Facebook	27	22.5
Snapchat	15	12.5
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary survey shows that YouTube (35%) is the most preferred platform among respondents, followed by Instagram (30%), Facebook (22.5%) and Snapchat (12.5%). Thus, video and visually oriented platforms constitute a substantial part of the respondents' social-media environment.

This finding is particularly relevant to the cultural dimension of the study. Visual and video-based platforms provide opportunities for rural youth to encounter and circulate cultural material such as folk music, traditional dances, festivals, food, dress and local ceremonies. Therefore, the importance of YouTube and Instagram in the survey indicates that cultural practices can increasingly be experienced through digital rather than exclusively face-to-face environments.

The primary evidence also suggests that rural youth are not merely passive consumers of digital content. Where respondents use these platforms to share

photographs, videos, songs, festivals or other local practices, social media can become a medium through which local culture is represented and reproduced.

This interpretation is broadly consistent with Thakur and Chander (2018), who highlighted the communication and information-sharing potential of social media among rural users in Himachal Pradesh. However, the present survey extends this perspective by demonstrating its relevance to cultural communication and representation.

Frequency of Social-Media Use

Table 3. Frequency of Social-Media Use

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Occasionally	12	10
Once a day	21	17.5
Several times a day	48	40
Very frequently	39	32.5
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary data demonstrate a high level of social-media engagement among the surveyed rural youth. Forty per cent of respondents reported using social media several times a day, while 32.5% described their use as very frequent. Taken together, these responses show that a substantial majority of respondents interact with social-media platforms repeatedly during their daily lives.

This frequency is important for understanding cultural transformation. Regular digital exposure increases the possibility that young people encounter cultural forms originating outside their immediate community. Music, clothing styles, language patterns, food preferences and entertainment can therefore become part of everyday cultural experience.

At the same time, frequent use does not automatically mean rejection of traditional culture. The subsequent primary findings are particularly important because they show that respondents simultaneously recognise social media as a means of cultural preservation and cultural change.

Thus, the survey points towards a process of continuous cultural interaction, rather than a simple transition from traditional to modern culture.

Social Media as a Tool of Cultural Preservation

Table 4. Perception of Social Media as a Tool for Cultural Preservation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	42	35
Agree	47	39.2
Neutral	18	15
Disagree	9	7.5
Strongly disagree	4	3.3
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary survey provides strong evidence of a positive perception of social media as a mechanism of cultural preservation. 74.2% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that social media contributes to cultural preservation, whereas only 10.8%

express disagreement.

This is one of the significant findings of the study. It suggests that rural youth do not necessarily perceive digitalisation as a threat to traditional culture. Instead, many respondents view digital platforms as an additional means through which cultural practices can be recorded, circulated and made visible.

The preservation function may include recording folk songs and dances, photographing traditional dress, documenting festivals and fairs, sharing traditional recipes, and recording stories or cultural knowledge possessed by older members of the community.

The finding is particularly significant because it is directly derived from respondents' perceptions. Rather than assuming that social media preserves culture, the primary data demonstrate that a substantial majority of surveyed youth themselves associate digital media with cultural preservation.

Thakur and Chander's (2018) observation regarding the information-sharing capacity of social media provides useful contextual support, but the cultural-preservation argument in the present study is primarily established through the field survey.

Cultural Practices Influenced by Social Media

Table 5. Cultural Practices Perceived to Be Influenced by Social Media

Cultural Dimension	Respondents	Percentage
Music and entertainment	101	84.2
Fashion and dress	94	78.3
Language and communication	88	73.3
Food habits	80	66.7
Festivals and fairs	73	60.8
Marriage practices	62	51.7

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary data demonstrate that music and entertainment (84.2%) are the cultural dimensions most frequently identified by respondents as being influenced by social media. This is followed by fashion and dress (78.3%), language and communication (73.3%), and food habits (66.7%).

These findings indicate that social-media influence is particularly visible in cultural practices that are easily communicated through images, videos and short-form digital content.

The relatively high response for fashion and dress suggests that rural youth are exposed to cultural styles beyond their immediate locality. Similarly, the influence on language and communication indicates that digital interaction may introduce new expressions, vocabulary and communication styles into rural social life.

Food habits also demonstrate the expanding cultural horizon of rural youth. Digital platforms expose respondents to recipes, eating practices and food trends from different geographical and cultural settings.

However, the primary evidence does not establish complete cultural replacement.

Rather, it suggests selective cultural adaptation. Traditional practices may continue while new cultural elements are incorporated into everyday life. For example, a respondent may adopt contemporary clothing in ordinary situations but continue wearing traditional dress during festivals or ceremonies.

The data therefore support the interpretation of cultural transformation rather than cultural disappearance.

Social Media and Local Cultural Identity

Table 6. *Perceived Impact of Social Media on Local Cultural Identity*

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Strengthens cultural identity	51	42.5
Promotes awareness of local culture	39	32.5
Both strengthens and changes culture	21	17.5
Weakens cultural identity	9	7.5
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary survey reveals a predominantly positive perception of the relationship between social media and local cultural identity. 42.5% of respondents believe that social media strengthens cultural identity, while another 32.5% believe that it promotes awareness of local culture.

Thus, nearly three-fourths of respondents associate social media with either strengthening cultural identity or increasing cultural awareness.

This finding is particularly important because it challenges the assumption that digitalisation necessarily produces cultural detachment. The respondents' perceptions indicate that social media may provide rural youth with new opportunities to display, communicate and reaffirm their local identity.

At the same time, 17.5% of respondents believe that social media both strengthens and changes culture. This response is analytically important because it reflects the dual character of digitalisation. Social media can preserve selected cultural elements while simultaneously modifying others.

Only 7.5% of respondents perceive social media as weakening cultural identity. Therefore, according to the primary evidence, the dominant perception among the surveyed rural youth is that social media has a constructive or mixed rather than exclusively destructive effect on local cultural identity.

Social Media and Intergenerational Cultural Transmission

Table 7. *Perceived Role of Social Media in Cultural Transmission between Generations*

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly positive	35	29.2
Positive	49	40.8
Moderate	23	19.2
Negative	9	7.5
Strongly negative	4	3.3
Total	120	100

Source: Primary survey.

Interpretation and Discussion

The primary data indicate that respondents generally perceive social media positively in relation to intergenerational cultural transmission. 70% of respondents report either a strongly positive or positive role of social media.

This finding suggests that digital technology may supplement traditional mechanisms of cultural transmission. Cultural knowledge that was previously transmitted primarily through face-to-face interaction, participation in community events and oral traditions can increasingly be recorded and digitally circulated.

The significance of this finding becomes particularly clear in relation to rural youth. Smartphones and social-media platforms can enable younger generations to record songs, stories, rituals, recipes, local histories and other forms of cultural knowledge associated with older generations.

However, the data should not be interpreted as demonstrating that digital transmission has replaced traditional transmission. Rather, the primary evidence supports the argument that social media is adding a new layer to existing mechanisms of cultural transmission.

Integrated Interpretation of Primary Findings

Dimension	Primary Survey Finding	Interpretation
Social-media engagement	72.5% use social media several times a day or very frequently	Social media forms a regular part of everyday life
Platform preference	YouTube and Instagram account for 65%	Visual media provides an important cultural environment
Cultural preservation	74.2% agree/strongly agree	Digital platforms are perceived as useful for preserving culture
Cultural influence	Music and entertainment 84.2%; fashion 78.3%	Digital exposure is contributing to cultural change

Source: Compiled from Primary Survey.

Overall Discussion

The primary evidence presents social media as a dual cultural process in rural Himachal Pradesh. On the one hand, respondents report considerable influence on music, entertainment, fashion, language and food habits. On the other hand, the majority also perceive social media as contributing to cultural preservation, local cultural awareness and intergenerational transmission.

The central finding, therefore, is not that social media is simply destroying traditional culture. The survey instead points towards cultural negotiation and selective adaptation. Rural youth appear to encounter external cultural forms while simultaneously retaining an interest in local cultural practices.

The most important contribution of the primary survey is consequently the identification of a relationship between digital engagement, cultural transformation and cultural continuity. Social media has created a new cultural space in which rural youth can consume external cultural content, participate in contemporary cultural

trends, and simultaneously record and represent elements of their own local culture.

Previous studies such as Thakur and Chander (2018) and Behl and Kapoor (2025) are useful in establishing the broader context of digital engagement in Himachal Pradesh. However, the principal conclusions of the present study emerge from the primary survey of 120 respondents.

Thus, the study argues that the cultural impact of social media among rural youth should be understood neither as complete cultural erosion nor as complete cultural preservation, but as a process of cultural transformation accompanied by continuity, adaptation and renewed forms of cultural expression.

Findings of the Study

Social media has become an important part of rural youth life

The primary evidence demonstrates that social media is no longer an occasional communication medium for rural youth. The high frequency of usage indicates that digital platforms have become embedded in everyday social and cultural interaction.

Visual social media is particularly influential

The dominance of YouTube and Instagram indicates that visual and video-based communication has become particularly important. This has implications for cultural practices because songs, dances, dress, festivals, food and rituals can be easily recorded and circulated through such platforms.

Social media has a dual cultural role

One of the most important findings is the dual role of social media. It exposes rural youth to new cultural forms while simultaneously providing opportunities to preserve and promote local traditions. Thus, digitalisation cannot be understood simply as a force of cultural westernisation or cultural erosion.

Popular culture is more strongly affected than deeply embedded traditions

The highest perceived influence is found in music, entertainment, fashion and language, whereas marriage practices show comparatively lower influence. This suggests that highly visible and easily changeable cultural practices respond more quickly to digital influence than deeply rooted social institutions and traditions.

Cultural preservation and cultural transformation occur simultaneously

The survey reveals an important paradox. Although respondents identify significant changes in music, fashion, language and food, a large majority also believe that social media helps preserve culture. Therefore, cultural change does not necessarily mean cultural disappearance.

Social media can strengthen local cultural identity

The finding that 75% of respondents either perceive social media as strengthening cultural identity or promoting awareness of local culture is significant. This suggests that rural youth can use digital platforms not only to consume external culture but also to display, communicate and reaffirm their own cultural identity.

Digital platforms are creating new forms of cultural transmission

The 70% positive response regarding intergenerational cultural transmission indicates that social media can supplement traditional mechanisms of cultural transmission. Traditional songs, stories, recipes, festivals, dress and local histories can potentially be recorded and shared digitally, allowing cultural knowledge to move beyond immediate face-to-face settings.

The study indicates cultural hybridisation

The overall evidence suggests that rural youth are not simply choosing between

“tradition” and “modernity.” Instead, they appear to combine elements of both. Traditional cultural practices may continue alongside contemporary music, fashion, language and digital lifestyles. The resulting process can therefore be understood as cultural hybridisation or selective cultural adaptation.

Overall Findings

The primary survey of 120 rural youth in Himachal Pradesh reveals that social media has become an important part of their everyday social and cultural life. The findings indicate that 72.5% of respondents use social media several times a day or very frequently, with YouTube and Instagram emerging as the most preferred platforms. The survey further demonstrates that social media is influencing various dimensions of cultural life, particularly music and entertainment (84.2%), fashion and dress (78.3%), language and communication (73.3%), and food habits (66.7%). At the same time, the findings challenge the assumption that digitalisation necessarily leads to cultural erosion. 74.2% of respondents perceive social media positively as a tool for cultural preservation, while 75% associate it with strengthening cultural identity or promoting awareness of local culture. Similarly, 70% perceive its role in intergenerational cultural transmission positively. The findings therefore suggest that social media has a dual impact on rural culture: it introduces new cultural influences while also creating opportunities to document, preserve and promote local traditions. Overall, the study indicates that rural youth are not simply abandoning traditional culture but are selectively adapting new cultural elements alongside existing practices. Thus, social media is contributing to cultural transformation, continuity and hybridisation rather than complete cultural displacement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media has emerged as an important cultural force among rural youth in Himachal Pradesh. The primary survey of 120 respondents demonstrates that digital platforms are influencing everyday cultural practices, particularly music, entertainment, fashion, language and food habits. At the same time, the findings reveal that social media is not functioning solely as an agent of cultural change. A substantial proportion of respondents perceive it as a means of preserving local traditions, strengthening cultural identity, promoting cultural awareness and facilitating intergenerational transmission. The study therefore challenges the conventional understanding that modern digital technologies necessarily lead to the decline of traditional rural culture. Instead, the evidence suggests a process of cultural continuity, adaptation and transformation. Rural youth are increasingly negotiating between traditional cultural practices and new cultural influences encountered through digital platforms. Social media has also created new spaces for the representation and circulation of local festivals, folk music, dress, food and other cultural expressions. Thus, the impact of social media should be understood as dual and dynamic, involving both cultural change and preservation. Overall, the study concludes that social media is contributing to the emergence of a hybrid cultural environment in rural Himachal Pradesh, where traditional cultural identities are being reinterpreted and expressed through contemporary digital forms.

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