



New Social System and Intercultural Communication in the Digital Age: An Indian Perspective

Abhishek Kumar

(Ph.D. Scholar)

Dr. Rachana Gangwar

(Associate Professor)

Mass Communication and Journalism

Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow
abhishekkumar8324@gmail.com

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 28-03-2025

Published: 15-04-2025

Keywords:

Intercultural Communication, Culture, Hybrid Identity, Digital Media, Intercultural Interaction, Social System, Norms and Values, Social Unity

ABSTRACT

A new social system that depends on cross-cultural contact and connectivity has emerged as a result of the revolutionary changes brought about by the introduction of new technology and digital media in India's social and cultural situation. This study explores how digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp allow Indian users to interact beyond language, regional, and religious barriers, creating a common digital space for intercultural communication and understanding. Digital media offers an unparalleled conduit for intercultural communication in a nation characterized by immense cultural diversity. Indian young people, in particular, are being exposed to and impacted by a variety of regional and global viewpoints. A more inclusive social ethos and hybrid identities are emerging as a result of these interactions, which are changing conventional social norms, identity indicators, and cultural connections. In order to investigate the nuances of intercultural interactions on digital platforms, this study uses both methods qualitative and quantitative data survey. The study aims to

determine the degree to which online interactions promote social integration, analyse the effect on social norms and values and examine hybrid identity formation. According to early researches, digital media creates a feeling of shared experience by fusing aspects of many cultures to create fresh identities. Moreover, it has been noted that these digital interactions have an effect on societal values by encouraging users to be open to variety and to develop flexible, pluralistic identities. This study will offer important new insights into the changing Indian social structure in the digital era and provide new ideas for promoting social cohesion in one of the most culturally diverse nations.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15223070>

Introduction

Culture is “that complex whole that which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habit acquired by man as a member of society.”

- E.B. Tylor

The digital era has transformed interaction and communication, changing the social and cultural fabric of countries all over the world. This change is most noticeable in India, a country renowned for its vast cultural variety. The advent of digital media has produced a dynamic and linked social environment with over 1.4 billion individuals representing a diverse mix of languages, faiths, and cultures. Social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become virtual communities where people from different cultural backgrounds can communicate, share ideas, and create relationships. By removing the conventional obstacles of language, geography, and social hierarchy, these platforms have made it possible for a new kind of international connection.

A new social structure that depends on intercultural communication and interaction has emerged as a result of this change. The digital ecosystem promotes virtual exchanges that cut over national and regional borders, in contrast to old systems that mostly depended on localized, face-to-face contacts. Using digital media to actively engage with a variety of viewpoints and cultures, Indian millennials in



particular are leading this change. In addition to changing identity markers, these interactions are also creating hybrid identities, affecting social norms, and promoting inclusion.

It becomes crucial in this situation to comprehend the nuances of intercultural communication in the digital era. In what ways do internet platforms help Indian consumers better understand other cultures? What effects do these exchanges have on cultural identities and conventional social norms? In a nation as varied as India, is it possible for digital media to genuinely bridge cultural gaps or does it run the risk of homogenizing distinctive cultural expressions?

By examining how digital media shapes social integration and intercultural communication in India, this study aims to answer these issues. It explores the experiences of Indian youth on digital platforms using a mixed-methods approach, looking at how these virtual interactions support a society that is more diverse and inclusive. By examining these relationships, the study seeks to provide light on India's changing social structure in the digital age, pointing out both advantages and disadvantages.

Statement of the Problem

Social cohesiveness has traditionally been both aided and hindered by India's vast cultural diversity, which includes a wide variety of languages, faiths, and customs. Intercultural communication is now possible because to the quick spread of digital media in recent years, which has opened up novel opportunities for intercultural interaction. Social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have developed into significant platforms for these exchanges, encouraging a feeling of commonality amongst people from different cultural origins. But there are also important concerns about this phenomenon's effects on India's social and cultural environment.

As the most active participants in the digital space, Indian youth are increasingly exposed to diverse regional and global perspectives, which is reshaping cultural connections and creating hybrid identities, potentially changing long-standing societal structures. However, the digital divide, algorithmic prejudices, and the risk of cultural homogenization pose significant barriers to equitable participation and representation in this new social system, even as digital platforms promise to bridge gaps and promote inclusivity.



Understanding how digital media is promoting intercultural communication and how much it promotes social integration while maintaining cultural variety is the main challenge.

- Are these platforms fostering superficial involvement and widening gaps, or are they actually promoting significant intercultural interactions?
- What effects do such interactions have on the development of hybrid identities, and how do they affect conventional Indian cultural norms and values?

In order to solve these issues, this study looks at how digital media contributes to the development of a new social structure that values interaction between cultures. It seeks to offer a thorough grasp of how Indian youth use digital platforms to inter-cultural divides, create identities, and support a more welcoming social culture in the digital era.

Objective of the study

This study's main goal is to investigate how, in the Indian context; digital media contributes to the development of a new social structure marked by intercultural interactions. The study specifically seeks to:

1. **To Examine Intercultural Interactions:** Examine how Indian users may communicate across language, regional, and religious borders via digital platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp.
2. **To Examine Hybrid Identity Formation:** Discover how Indian youth's development of hybrid identities is influenced by their exposure to many cultural viewpoints on digital platforms.
3. **To Analyse the Effect on Social Norms and Values:** Determine how much digital media interactions have changed India's conventional social norms, values, and connections with culture.

Research Question

1. In what ways does digital media facilitate in the development of a new social structure in India that is marked by intercultural interaction?



2. How are intercultural interactions made possible for Indian users of platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube?
3. How can internet platforms contribute to Indian youth's development of hybrid identities?
4. What impact do interactions on digital media have on India's traditional cultural values, markers of identification, and social norms?

These research questions seek to offer a thorough grasp of how digital media and intercultural communication influence India's changing sociocultural dynamics.

Literature Review

Intercultural communication has changed due to the quick development of digital media, especially in multicultural countries like India. In order to comprehend how digital platforms support a new social structure that encourages intercultural communication and connectedness in the Indian setting, this literature review examines important topics and theoretical frameworks.

1. Intercultural Communication and Digital Media

Because they enable users to communicate across linguistic, cultural, and geographic borders, digital platforms are widely acknowledged as facilitators of intercultural communication. Digital globalization has produced "imagined worlds" where people from different cultures exchange ideas and stories, promoting understanding between them, claims Appadurai (1996). Castells (2010) characterizes this transformation as the rise of a "network society," in which cross-cultural relationships are facilitated by online exchanges.

Platforms like YouTube and Instagram are instruments for intercultural engagement that help users negotiate the country's vast cultural variety, according to studies specifically about India, such Sundaram (2019). Social media campaigns that highlight local customs or culinary techniques, for example, frequently go beyond local audiences and foster a respect for other cultures among users from various backgrounds.



2. The Formation of Hybrid Identity

Digital connections can result in the development of hybrid identities that combine aspects of both local and international cultures. According to Hall (1996), identity is malleable and always changing, especially when it comes to media contacts. Indian teenagers frequently create pluralistic identities that reflect this dual impact since they are exposed to both global trends and traditional cultural norms on social media sites like Instagram.

Indian millennials, for instance, are drawn to material that blends local aesthetics with global sensibilities, such as Bollywood-inspired fashion trends that include worldwide patterns, according to study by Banaji (2017). By overcoming strict cultural borders, these hybrid identities foster a more welcoming social culture.

3. The transformation of cultural values and social norms

Social norms and values are significantly impacted by contacts with digital media. Sen (2020) observes that when individuals are exposed to a range of viewpoints on platforms like YouTube channels or WhatsApp groups, they are prompted to reconsider traditional beliefs, such as gender roles or caste-based rituals. This shift is especially noticeable among young Indians living in cities, who are more prone to embrace progressive and egalitarian views as a result of their exposure to international viewpoints on the internet.

Critics like Rajagopal (2019), however, warn that although digital media promotes diversity, it also runs the danger of weakening unique cultural identities. Social media platforms' algorithmic design occasionally favours uniformity over variety, which results in cultural homogenization rather than fruitful intercultural communication.

4. Challenges in getting Intercultural Communication

Despite its potential, digital media's role in intercultural communication is not without challenges. The digital divide is still a major obstacle in India, as access to technology is unequally distributed between rural and urban areas; the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) 2023 report states that only 38% of rural India has internet penetration, which limits the ability of marginalized groups to participate in digital intercultural interactions. Additionally, algorithmic biases on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram can create echo chambers, reinforcing pre-existing cultural



stereotypes and limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints. Vaishnav's (2022) research emphasizes that although digital platforms promote cultural exchange, they can also polarize if not carefully moderated.

5. Possibilities to Encourage Social Unity

Digital media has the potential to improve social cohesiveness in culturally diverse cultures like India, according to several researches. Initiatives for digital literacy and inclusive content production techniques can guarantee fair participation and bridge the digital gap. For example, initiatives like "**Digital India**" seek to expand access to the internet and foster digital literacy in order to facilitate more engagement in cross-cultural communication.

Additionally, it has been shown that user-generated material honouring local customs, holidays, and languages may promote tolerance and understanding across various ethnic groups. According to Shukla (2021), this kind of information preserves cultural variety while fostering a feeling of common identity.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to investigate how digital media is influencing India's new social structure, which is marked by intercultural interaction. The study attempts to offer a thorough grasp of the nuances, trends, and effects of digital interactions among Indian users, especially young people, by fusing quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

1. Research Design

A descriptive and exploratory research approach is used in the study to examine:

- ❖ The ways that intercultural conversation occurs in online forums.
- ❖ Social norms are changing and hybrid identities are emerging.

2. Sampling: Indian youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who use digital platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube are the target population.

Sampling technique: Non-Probability, Purposive Sampling

The size of the sample

Quantitative and Qualitative Survey

Survey design: The objectives behind it are to collect quantitative data regarding the New Social System and Intercultural Communication in the Digital. Sample size 50 is targeted for the result, on the basis of purposive sampling.

3. Data Collection

Quantitative Data Collection

- ❖ **Survey:** Google Forms is being used to run a structured online survey.

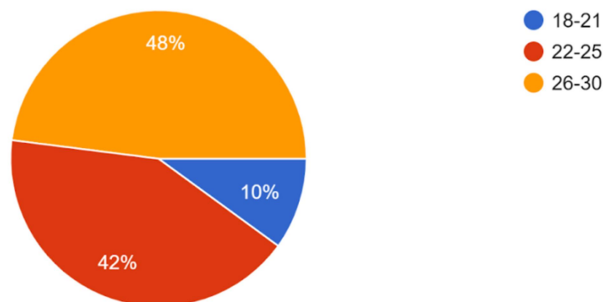
Objective:

- ❖ Evaluate how frequently and what kind of intercultural conversations occur in online forums.
- ❖ Examine how people see the development of hybrid identities and shifts in cultural values.
- ❖ Analyse the Effect on Social Norms and Values

Analysis and Discussion

A. Demographic Information

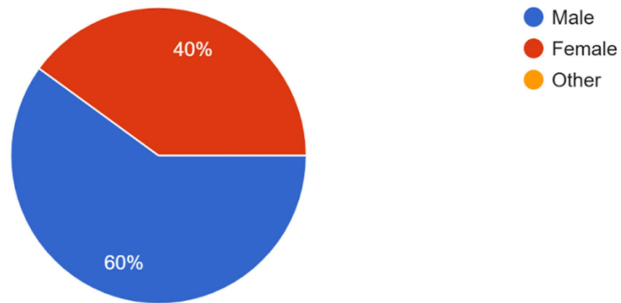
Age
50 responses





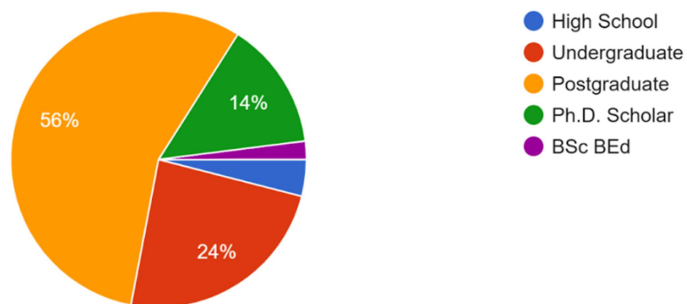
Gender

50 responses



Educational Qualification

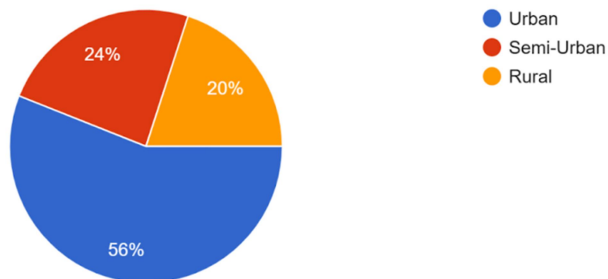
50 responses



Region of Residence

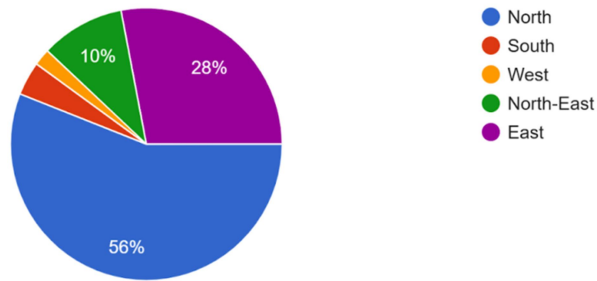
Region of Residence

50 responses



Belongs to which region of India?

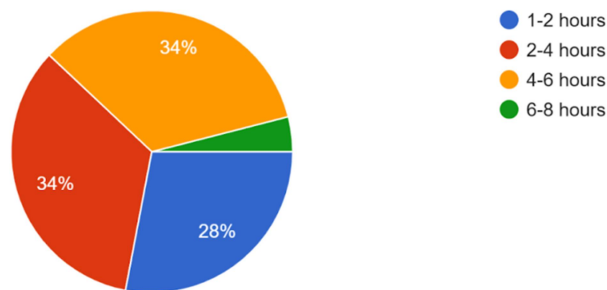
50 responses



B. Digital Media

1. How many hours would you use social media in a day? (आप एक दिन में कितने घंटे सोशल मीडिया का उपयोग करते हैं?)

50 responses

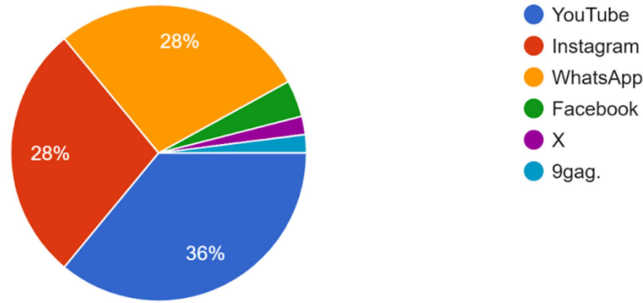


✚ The most common Usage is the 2-4 hours and 4-6 hours a day is the most use amount of period spent on social media across all age groups.



2. Which platform do you use most frequently for cultural engagement? (सांस्कृतिक जुड़ाव के लिए आप किस मंच का सबसे अधिक उपयोग करते हैं?)

50 responses



The data revealed that the significant respondent use the YouTube, Whatsapp and Instagram to engage with different culture.

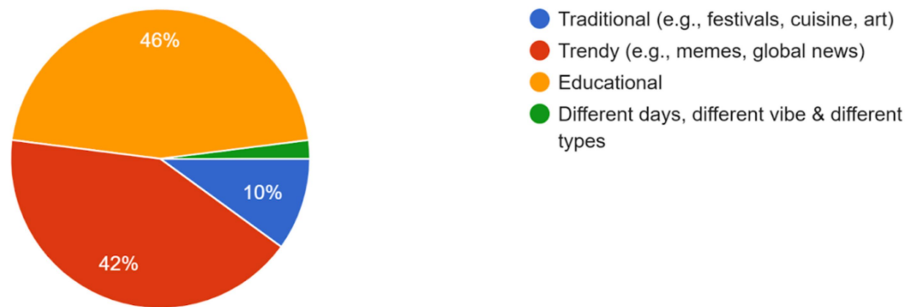
3. Why do you prefer this platform?

Most of the respondent said that-

Because it exchange information and keep us updated with surroundings, for communication purpose also and it helps in maintaining touch with people around the world, easy to use and infotainment.

4. What type of content do you engage with the most? (आप किस प्रकार की विषय-वस्तु को सबसे ज्यादा देखते हैं?)

50 responses

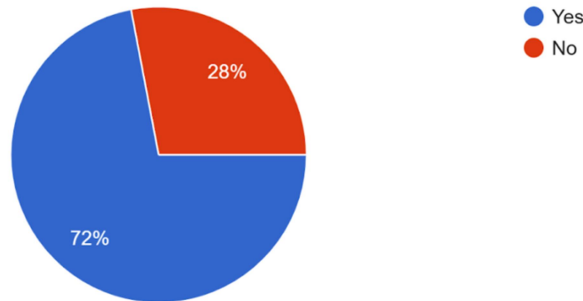


The youth have the highest overall engagement, especially with educational and trendy content.

C. Intercultural Interactions

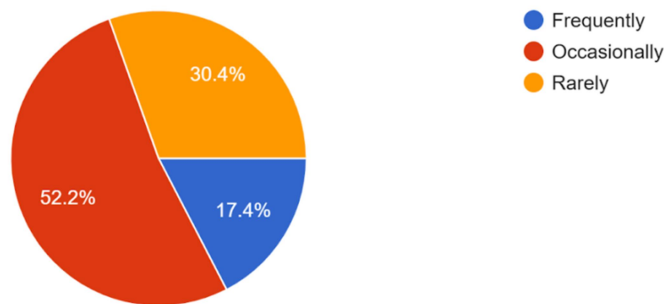
1. Have you interacted with people from different cultural or regional backgrounds on digital platforms? (क्या आपने डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म पर विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक या क्षेत्रीय पृष्ठभूमि के लोगों के साथ बातचीत की है?)

50 responses



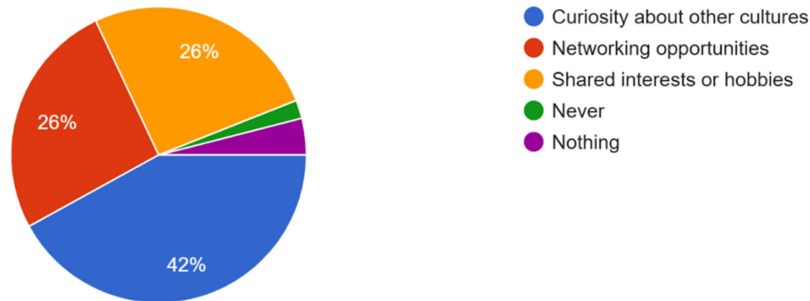
2. If yes, how often do you engage in such intercultural interactions? (यदि हां, तो आप कितनी बार इस तरह के अंतरसांस्कृतिक संपर्कों में शामिल होते हैं?)

46 responses



3. What motivates you to interact with individuals from different cultural backgrounds online?(आपको ऑनलाइन विभिन्न सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमियों के व्यक्तियों के साथ बातचीत करने की क्या प्रेरणा मिलती है?)

50 responses



✚ The majority of respondents said they frequently or occasionally interacted with people from diverse cultural or geographic origins.

The following were the main reasons for interacting with people from different cultures:

- Both rural and urban participants regularly expressed a curiosity about foreign cultures.
- Networking opportunities, particularly to individuals who live in cities and semi-urban areas.
- Interests, including festivals, music, or cuisine.

Most respondents thought that these exchanges helped them understand different cultures better, with many expressing strong agreement. Examples of cultural awareness included learning new languages, adopting dress trends, celebrating different festivals, and absorbing cultural traditions like culinary habits.

5. Have you adopted any new practices, traditions, or ideas through these interactions? If yes, please specify it.

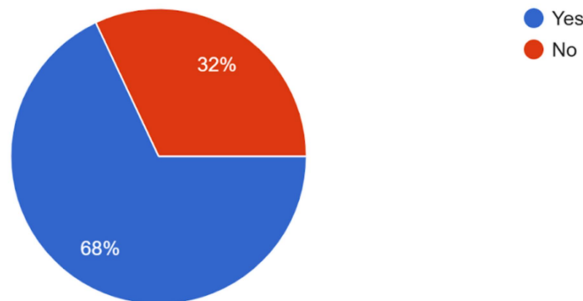
A number of participants reported adopting new cultural customs, such as:

- Cultural festivals and dress styles.
- Learning a language (e.g., acquiring dialects or accents).
- Food preferences (e.g., exploring new foods).

D. Hybrid Identity Formation

1. Do you think your online interactions have influenced your cultural identity? (क्या आपको लगता है कि आपकी ऑनलाइन बातचीत ने आपकी सांस्कृतिक पहचान को प्रभावित किया है?)

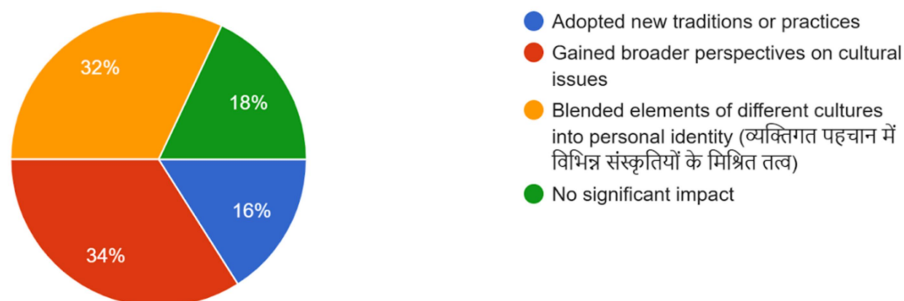
50 responses



✚ A significant number of participants, both male and female, agreed that their cultural identity was shaped by their online interactions. A smaller number of participants asserted that their cultural identity was not significantly influenced by online interactions.

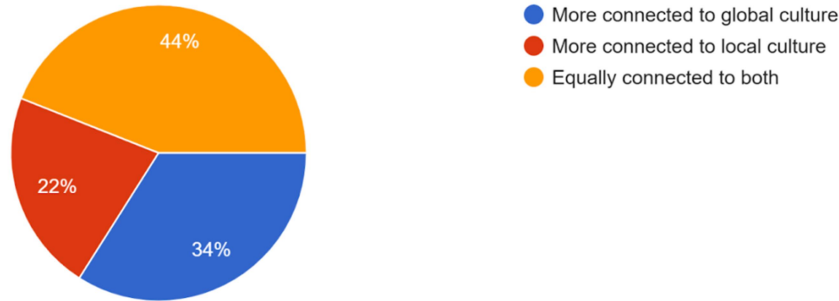
2. In what ways have these interactions influenced your cultural identity? (इन बातचीत ने आपकी सांस्कृतिक पहचान को किस प्रकार प्रभावित किया है?)

50 responses



✚ Respondents reported that they were able to obtain a wider understanding of cultural concerns through online interaction and significant number of participants adopting elements of various cultures into their personal identity and adopt, blend, or increase their awareness of cultural traditions by being exposed to a variety of cultures.

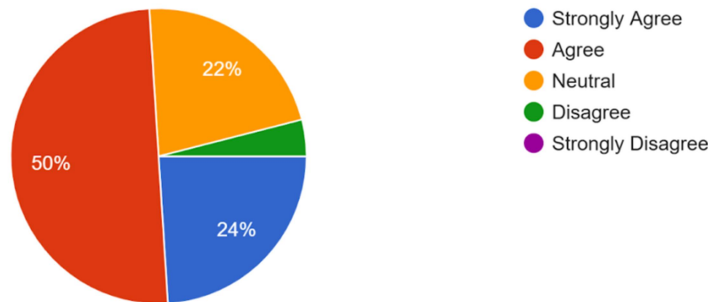
3. Do you feel more connected to global culture or your local culture due to digital media use? (क्या आप डिजिटल मीडिया के उपयोग के कारण वैश्विक संस्कृति या अपनी स्थानीय संस्कृति से अधिक जुड़ाव महसूस करते हैं?)
50 responses



Participants who adopted new traditions or gained broader perspectives tended to experience a stronger sense of interaction to global culture. Respondents frequently reported a stronger sense of connection to their local culture when they incorporated cultural elements or implemented novel practices. Many participants said they felt equally connected to both global and local cultures. As respondents mix elements from both local and global cultures into their lives, the data shows the increasing hybridization of identities.

E. Impact on Social Norms and Values

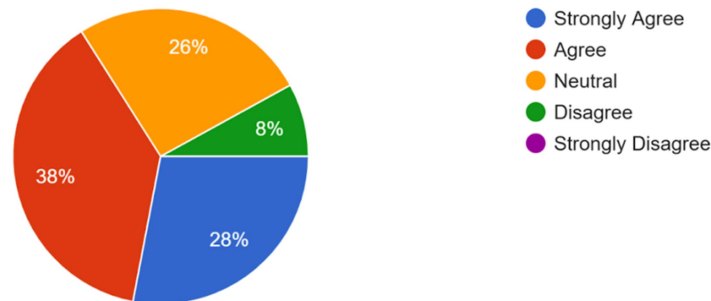
1. Have your interactions on digital platforms influenced your views on traditional social norms and values (e.g., gender roles, caste, religion)? (क्या डिजि...काएं, जाति, धर्म) पर आपके विचारों को प्रभावित किया है?)
50 responses



✚ Regarding traditional societal norms and values including gender roles, caste, and religion, a significant number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their digital interactions shaped their opinions.

2. Do you think digital platforms promote inclusivity and openness to diverse cultures? (क्या आपको लगता है कि डिजिटल प्लेटफॉर्म विविध संस्कृतियों के प्रति समावेशिता और खुलेपन को बढ़ावा देते हैं?)

50 responses



✚ Respondent agreed that digital platforms encourage inclusion and openness to different cultures. Some participants disagreed, expressing uncertainty regarding the significance of digital platforms in promoting diversity.

3. What traditional social norms or values do you think have been most impacted by your digital interactions?

Lifestyle Changes: A lot of respondents mentioned shifts in their views on international relations, gender roles, and human rights, as well as in their eating and clothing habits.

Cultural and Religious Views: A few individuals emphasized changes in social relativism, cultural traditions, and beliefs on religion and cult activities.

✚ A small percentage of respondents stated that their conventional societal norms and values had little or no influence.

Discussion

Intercultural Interactions

The data shows how online platforms facilitate intercultural interaction through virtual spaces offered by platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Users may interact with a variety of cultural customs, promoting inclusivity and mutual understanding.



The predominance of networking opportunities and curiosity about various cultures reflected the participants' willingness to interact and learn. Interactions frequently resulted in the mixing of cultural traditions, including the celebration of festivals from various areas, the adoption of dress trends, and the incorporation of dialects.

Hybrid Identity Formation

Users of digital platforms can adopt, mix, or increase their awareness of cultural traditions by being exposed to a variety of cultures. As respondents integrate aspects of both local and global cultures into their lives, so data shows that increasing hybridization of identities.

Impact on Social Norms and Values

Digital platforms serve as a conduit for intercultural interactions, allowing people to adopt diversity, challenge traditional assumptions, and adopt new behaviours.

The data shows the dual characteristics of digital platforms, whereas they serve as catalysts for social and cultural change, both individual as well as societal variables limit their influence. This nuanced relation indicates the need for more research on the ways in which digital media influences social norms.

Findings and Conclusion

Findings

1. Examine Intercultural Interactions:

- Intercultural interacts with are motivated by shared interests, networking opportunities, and curiosity about other cultures.
- Most respondents engage in active communication with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, both frequently and rarely.
- The majority of participants firmly agreed that these exchanges enhanced their knowledge of different cultures.

2. Examine Hybrid Identity Formation:

- Most respondents admitted that their cultural identity was impacted by their online interaction.
- 40% of the people said they have an equal sense of belonging to local and global cultures. While 25% feel more a part of the local culture, 35% feel more a part of the global culture.

3. Analyse the Effect on Social Norms and Values:

- Most respondents said that their opinions on norms including caste, religion, and gender roles are influenced by internet media. Although some participants are still uncertain, many participants think internet platforms encourage diversity and cultural openness.
- Adoption of New Practices: According to the respondents, they have adopted cultural traditions like festivals, eating habits, and ways to dress.

According to the findings, Indian youth's cultural identity is greatly influenced by their online interactions. Through the acceptance of new customs, the blending of cultural aspects, and the acquisition of wider viewpoints, these contacts promotes cultural exchange. Depending on their relationships, some participants favour one culture over the other, even though many feel equally linked to both local and global cultures.

Conclusion

The study emphasizes how digital platforms have the capacity to revolutionize intercultural communication among Indian users. These platforms support cultural learning, hybrid identities, and the adoption of inclusive practices by facilitating frequent valuable relationships. Digital media is an effective instrument for changing cultural identity since it promotes the adoption of new cultural practices as well as the strengthening of regional cultural bonds. The general trend suggests that digital platforms are promoting a dynamic interaction between local and global cultures, resulting in a more linked yet culturally varied society, even though its effects differ by age, location, and gender. The findings show how, for many people, digital platforms are changing traditional societal norms and values, especially when it comes to promoting diversity and affecting views on gender, culture, and human rights. However, each person has a different thought level of this impact.



References

- Sen, A. (2020). "Social Media and Cultural Transformation in India." *Journal of Media Studies*, 14(2), 45-60.
- Hall, S. (1996). *Cultural and Diaspora*. Routledge.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimension of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The Rise of Network Society*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Sundaram, R. (2022). *Digitality and Democracy: Technological Mediation in India*. Oxford University Press.
- Shukla, P. (2021). "Regional Identities in the Age of Digital Media." *Media and Society Review*, 9(1), 67-81.
- Vaishnav, R. (2022). "Algorithmic Biases and Their Impact on Intercultural Communication." *Digital Horizons Journal*, 11(3), 89-105.
- Rajagopal, A. (2019). *Media and Utopia: History, Imagination, and Technology*. Oxford University Press.
- Banaji, S. (2017). *Children and Media in India: Narrative of Class, Agency and Social Change*. Routledge.