

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RURAL LIFE IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH: WITH REFERENCE TO THE YEARS 2012 AND 2022

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to analyze the evolving role of social media in the rural context of western Uttar Pradesh through comparative analysis in two different periods – 2012 and 2022. It is the primary objective of this study to examine the impact of growth in social media during one decade on the various aspects of rural existence like age structure, education, means of communication, awareness, and socio-cultural attitudes.

According to the results, social media usage in 2012 was mainly restricted to the 20-39 age category and those with high levels of education. In 2022, however, social media has grown to reach adolescents (10-19 years old) as well as people of middle age. This expansion can be attributed mainly to the advancements in digital technology as well as reductions in internet costs and the penetration of mobile phones in rural settings. In terms of education level, social media usage is no longer limited to those who are highly educated.

There has been another important development regarding the choice of platforms. As Facebook and WhatsApp were the platforms in use in 2012, video-oriented sites like YouTube and Instagram gained importance by 2022. With the development in platforms, the way in which users engage with each other has also changed from the exchange of textual information to that of visual content, entertainment, and communication. Another important observation from the study is that social media positively influenced awareness and questioning about cultural and social issues, such as superstitious thinking.

The findings show that social media has emerged as an essential tool for communication and information in rural communities. While its effects may differ based on age, education, and computer skills, it remains a significant variable in the context of studying social transformation in rural Western Uttar Pradesh.

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INTRODUCTION

The fast development of information and communication technologies in the modern era of the twentieth century has changed the way people communicate and interact^[1]. Information and communication technologies include social media platforms that have become a source of sharing ideas, information, and social connections^[2]. Although research in the field of technology has been concentrated mainly on urban societies, the recent changes show that rural societies are also getting more involved in technological connectivity.

Social media impact has been observed in an agricultural dominated society like Western Uttar Pradesh after a decade^[3]. People from various professions and ages including farmers, students, salaried people, businessmen, women and senior citizens are increasingly using social media for purposes of communicating, seeking information, and recreation. Consequently, social media is also having its impact on social behavior, culture, and politics within the rural community.

However, this process did not happen instantly. In the initial period, there was a reluctance of villagers to adopt social media because of poor digital literacy skills and inability to access smartphone and Internet facilities^[4]. By 2012, it was predominantly used by relatively literate and financially stable people, mostly aged between 20 to 39 years. Gradually, there was an increase in usage among teenagers and young adults owing to their better access to mobile technology and proficiency in digital devices^[5].

This change is also noticeable regarding the educational level of social media users. In 2012, social media was widely used by people who had either intermediate or higher levels of education. However, in 2022, people who have finished junior and senior schools became social media users. This was made possible due to the availability of cheap internet services and better network connectivity^[6]. Moreover, social media became even more significant during the COVID-19 pandemic as a means of information dissemination and communication among rural dwellers.

In this context, the current research titled “Comparative Study of Social Media Impact on Rural Society in Western Uttar Pradesh: An Analysis from the Perspective of 2012 and 2022” aims to explore the changes that have been brought about by social media over the last ten years.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Understanding the sources of information and the level of public awareness is essential for the overall development of any region. In recent years, social media has expanded rapidly and has reached almost every section of society, including rural areas that were once considered relatively isolated from digital communication. However, there is still insufficient clarity regarding the specific ways in which social media is used in the rural society of Western Uttar Pradesh and the nature of changes it has brought about over time.

The central issue to be investigated in this research involves exploring and explaining how the usage patterns, uses of social media, awareness, and wider social impacts have evolved from 2012 to 2022 concerning the platforms utilized. The study aims to determine the trends emerging from the investigation of these variables and how they have contributed to social transformation in rural Western Uttar Pradesh.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past research works suggest that there have been many changes that have taken place in terms of communication methods, social structure, and social values due to the advent of social media. According to Amit Kumar and Rajesh Singh, there has been a growing trend among the rural youth of using social media to gain access to information, entertainment and social interactions^[7]. Likewise, Praveen Sharma also considers social media to be a source of social change where it challenges old ways of thinking and helps bring about new social values^[8]. Sunil Verma further mentions that the spread of information technology has affected the rural social structure, especially the life of the young generation^[9].

The research studies on agricultural communication highlight the importance of social media use among farmers. According to Kaushal Mishra, digital media can help farmers gain valuable information about new methods used in agriculture, market prices, and welfare schemes offered by the government^[10]. Narendra Singh and Pradeep Yadav mentioned that social media should not be seen just as an entertaining medium but also as a platform for making rural youths politically and socially aware^[11]. Manoj Tripathi observed that there is a changing trend within traditional culture due to digital communication^[12]. On the other hand, Sanjay Gupta discussed the spread of fake news in the countryside because of digital illiteracy among rural folks^[13].

Some scholars have highlighted the significance of digital literacy in relation to rural development. Kamal Rawat pointed out digital skills as a significant requirement for effective

utilization of information^[14]. Deepak Singh has explored the broad social impact of social media in India and introduced it as a tool that promotes participation and expression^[15]. Sandeep Chauhan has looked into the politics of social media and found that social media plays an increasing role in raising political awareness and participation in rural areas^[16].

Some other researchers have linked social media with cultural change processes and global exposure. For instance, Rahul Mehta argued that social networking sites act as a means connecting the rural society with global cultural changes^[17]. Rajendra Yadav argued that digital media have gained more power over traditional media in influencing people's opinions^[18]. Salman Khan perceived social media as a medium that facilitates social awareness and makes people conscious about their rights and obligations^[19]. Ashok Tiwari made the connection between the growth of digital mediums with social and economic changes^[20]. Jayesh Patel argued that social media transforms the dynamics of interpersonal interactions, social relationships, and engagement in social life^[21]. Rohit Verma revealed an increase in the consumption of digital information in rural areas in India after 2020^[22]. Sanjay Bhardwaj cautioned that greater exposure of rural youths to global culture may make them less concerned about their traditional culture^[23]. Pramod Dutt considered social media as a potent tool for social involvement^[24]. Sunil Mishra linked the digital world with empowerment and better educational and employment opportunities^[25].

Some researchers have considered the development aspect of social media more directly. For example, Ashok Chaubey studied the relation of internet use with rural development^[26]. Manoj Sen viewed social media from the perspective of social change between tradition and modernity as a mediator^[27]. Ravi Kashyap brought forward the issue of digital divide and the disparities in the access of digital resources by the rural people^[28]. Vinod Rana characterized social media as a major provider of information, awareness, and entertainment in rural society^[29].

Literature and theory have been helpful in the understanding of the phenomenon. Ajay Agrawal contended that technological innovation makes information easily accessible and plays a role in fields such as education, agriculture, and social awareness^[30]. Ramesh Chaudhary associated the revolution in the internet with greater social mobility^[31]. Anil Vajpayee noted mobile technology as an efficient communication device^[32]. Arun Pandey saw media as one of the key players in determining human behavior^[33]. Pradeep Joshi observed the information explosion as an issue of great opportunity and challenge for society^[34]. Narendra Saxena believed that mass media acts as a powerful force of change in rural society^[35], while Amit Srivastava found

the new forms of communication media connected with social transformation in rural society^[36].

The literature review above clearly indicates that social media has had an impact on rural life in various respects, such as information sharing, awareness, culture, behavior, and lifestyle. However, most research works conducted so far have been done under current circumstances without enough comparative analysis over various eras. In-depth comparative studies concerning the year 2012 and 2022 are not available at present. This study will attempt to bridge the gap through an analysis and comparison of the impact of social media on rural life in western Uttar Pradesh during these two eras.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To review the extent, accessibility, popularity and usage patterns of social media in rural Western Uttar Pradesh in 2012 and 2022.
2. To find out the difference in social media usage amongst people in different age groups and educational backgrounds and find out the shift in trend over the specified period of time.
3. To investigate the effects of social media on social norms, culture, tradition, activities and awareness among the rural population.
4. To determine any difference in the usage hours of social media on a daily basis and see how usage is regulated and controlled from 2012 to 2022.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Is the usage of social media more prevalent and diverse across age and education in rural areas in 2022 than in 2012?
2. Has the use of video and visual-based social media platforms increased in popularity over text-based social media platforms in rural areas in 2022 than in 2012?
3. Does social media have a more positive effect on rural areas through awareness, information, and social interaction?

STUDY AREA

In this research, 400 samples were taken from 38 villages spread across 12 districts of Western Uttar Pradesh, which include Meerut, Baghpat, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr, Saharanpur, Hapur, Ghaziabad, Amroha, Shamli, Mathura, Aligarh, and Hathras. The villages selected included one that was remote and backward, whereas the other was comparatively more advanced and closer to a highway.

Most of the selected villages are dependent upon agriculture and thus still depict the village life, culture, and characteristics, even though they have adapted themselves to a modern lifestyle. There are villages that are economically prosperous and have amenities like ACs, coolers, refrigerators, and modern appliances, whereas there are also villages that are socioeconomically backward.

RESEARCH METHOD AND STAGES

In order to obtain research results, the following approaches were applied:

1. Qualitative approach: description of social phenomena in terms of qualitative characteristics.
2. Survey approach: questioning was conducted using a schedule among 400 respondents (285 men and 115 women).

SAMPLE DESIGN

The study adopted a mixed approach of stratified quota random sampling technique. Five out of seven divisions of Western Uttar Pradesh (Meerut, Saharanpur, Aligarh, Moradabad and Agra) and 12 districts were chosen for the study. The respondents were questioned about when they started using social media networks and what social media network they use most. The respondents were asked questions such as: Which social media network do you use most? What activities do you indulge in mostly on social media network? How much time do you spend on social media network per day? To what extent have social media networks affected your life? To what extent have you become aware through social media networks? To what extent has social media network helped you in your everyday routine activities? To what extent has social media network been beneficial in eliminating social evils and superstition? To what extent have changes taken place in traditional customs due to social media networks?

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table No. 1.1

Most Used Social Media Platforms (in %)

Most Used Social Media Platforms / Year	Facebook	YouTube	WhatsApp	Instagram	Telegram	Snapchat	Twitter	LinkedIn	Total
2012	26	33	30	11	0	0	0	0	100
2022	6.2	47.6	10.4	33	0	2.1	0	0.7	100

Comparison between social media platform use in rural areas of Western Uttar Pradesh for two different time periods i.e. year 2012 and 2022 is discussed in Table 1.1 below. It is evident that there has been a clear transition in terms of social media platform preference during these ten years. For instance, YouTube emerged as the preferred platform (33%), with WhatsApp being the second most used social media application (30%) and Facebook as the third popular option (26%). Use of Instagram was quite low (11%), whereas Telegram, Snapchat, Twitter and LinkedIn had virtually no users in these areas in 2012. However, in 2022, the trend of use for various social media applications has undergone significant change. For example, YouTube's popularity increased further as 47.6% of rural users use YouTube as compared to other social media sites. It indicates that rural youth, farmers and working adults prefer video-based social media sites, which contain information, entertainment and education-based videos. On the other hand, Instagram gained a lot of traction (33%) because people find it more appealing due to reels, etc. Moreover, users of WhatsApp and Facebook declined to 10.4% and 6.2%, respectively.

The relative underutilization of platforms like Snapchat (2.1%) and LinkedIn (0.7%) also suggests that professional networking and specialized roles of social media have yet to gain much acceptance among rural populations.

Table No. 1.2

Activities Performed on Social Media (in %)

Activities Performed on Social Media / Year	News	Messaging	Chatting	Gaming	Entertainment	Music	Videos	Study	Total
2012	66.7	59.3	37	11.1	77.7	70.4	81.5	0	100
2022	44.8	35.7	26	16.8	74.1	73.4	89.5	0	100

Activities listed in Table 1.2 show the main ways social media was utilized by rural respondents in 2012 and 2022. The predominant use in 2012 was associated with both entertainment and information acquisition purposes. The largest proportion of participants (81.5%) watched videos online, while entertainment-related activities took second place (77.7%). It should be noted that listening to music was also popular (70.4%). Reading news online made up to 66.7% of activities carried out through social media, which means that social media had started operating as a source of information in 2012. Some activities, such as messaging (59.3%) and chatting (37%), were performed as well but at a lower level. Social media usage for playing games remained insignificant (11.1%), whereas its use for educational purposes did not exist as no one from the respondents claimed he or she utilized social media for learning purposes.

In 2022, some interesting developments were made with regard to patterns of behavior. The number of respondents who accessed social media sites to watch videos further increased to 89.5%, reflecting the increasing prevalence of video-sharing sites like YouTube and other video-sharing applications. The rate of entertainment (74.1%) and songs (73.4%) also did not change significantly. However, there was a sharp decline in behaviors such as accessing social media sites to read news (44.8%), send messages (35.7%), and chat (26%), showing a movement from using social media in order to communicate to using it for the purpose of consuming content. There was an increase in game-playing through social media sites to 16.8%, indicating the growing influence of mobile phones on rural leisure practices. Nevertheless, the rate at which the rural populace used social media for educational purposes still stood at zero percent.

Table No. 1.3

Daily Time Spent on Social Media (in %)

Daily Time Spent on Social Media / Year	1–2 hrs	3–5 hrs	6–10 hrs	Above 10 hrs	Total
2012	33.3	37	18.5	11.1	100
2022	48.3	37	11.2	3.5	100

The distribution of time spend on social media by the rural respondents for 2012 and 2022 is shown in table 1.3. It can be seen from table 1.3 that, in 2012, the maximum percentage of respondents were using social media for three to five hours daily (37%), which reflects the high level of attraction of such platforms at their initial stages of adoption in rural settings. On the other hand, there was also a significant percentage of those who used social media for an hour to two hours (33.3%). Furthermore, it is worth noting that there were people who used social media for six to ten hours (18.5%) and for more than ten hours per day (11.1%). It implies that the usage behavior of some people reflected their excessive usage of social media.

An increase in daily usage can clearly be seen in 2022. Most of the participants (48.3%) used social media for only one to two hours a day, while the percentage of participants using social media for three to five hours per day was 37%, the same as before. However, percentages of those who spent six to ten hours and more than ten hours using social media per day dropped to 11.2% and 3.5%, respectively. This demonstrates that, by 2022, rural residents had become more rational in their use of social media, probably because they were more aware of digital technologies and the need for proper time management.

Table No. 1.4

Extent of Influence of Social Media (in %)

Extent of Influence of Social Media / Year	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	Total
2012	7.4	37	30	18.5	7.4	100
2022	9	34.3	19.6	23.8	13.3	100

The impact of social media in rural communities of Western Uttar Pradesh in 2012 and 2022 is captured in Table 1.4. In 2012, there was a notable percentage of respondents who believed that social media had “a very much effect” (37%) or “a moderate effect” (30%). The existence of respondents who perceived that social media had “a slight effect” (18.5%) meant that social media had started having its effect in rural society, but it did not yet have a universal effect on everyone. The same percentage of respondents perceived social media as either “extremely influential” (7.4%) or “not at all influential” (7.4%), implying that social media was perceived to have an uneven impact on rural society. Generally, a total percentage of over two-thirds of respondents (74.4%) felt that social media was either “extremely, very much, or moderately influential.”

Figure 1.4 shows how rural residents in Western Uttar Pradesh viewed the impact of social media in their lives in 2012 and 2022. It can be seen that in 2012, a substantial number of respondents felt that social media had impacted them either "very much" (37%) or "moderately" (30%). The inclusion of respondents who believed that social media impacted them "slightly" (18.5%) implies that social media had started making its mark in rural society, but its influence was not universal. Equal percentages of respondents believed that social media was "extremely" influential (7.4%) and "not at all" influential (7.4%). This implies a mixed reaction in the initial stages of social media usage. Overall, it can be seen that nearly three-quarters of the respondents (74.4%) belonged to the "extremely," "very much," and "moderately" influenced groups.

Table No. 1.5

Awareness Generated by Social Media (in %)

Awareness Generated by Social Media /Year	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	Cannot Say	Total
2012	0	52	15	22.2	11.1	0	100
2022	7	40.6	22.4	18.2	8.4	3.5	100

From Table 1.5, it can be noted that in spite of the fact that social media use among rural residents was at its early stages in 2012, the significance of this phenomenon for the purposes of raising awareness was already evident. As many as 52% of the participants claimed that social media made them “very much” aware of different problems. A smaller group of people (15%) stated that social media made them “moderately” aware. 22.2% of respondents said that they became only “slightly” aware thanks to social media. On the other hand, 11.1% claimed that social media had no impact on their awareness at all. It is worth noting that none of the participants used the categories “extremely” or “cannot say”. It seems that social media was regarded as something relatively new in 2012.

Social media became an integral part of rural life in 2022, and views on its influence on awareness were quite diverse. A relatively small portion of respondents (7%) noted that social media made them “extremely” aware. The largest number (40.6%) continued to see the contribution of social media as making them “very much” aware, even though the percentage was somewhat smaller compared to 2012. Approximately 22.4% found that social media helped them be “moderately” aware, whereas 18.2% saw it as merely “slightly” affecting awareness. Moreover, 8.4% believed that social media did not help them be more aware. For the first time, 3.5% chose the option “cannot say.”

Table No. 1.6

Help in Daily Activities through Social Media (in %)

Help in Daily Activities	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	Cannot Say	Total
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through Social Media / Year							
2012	4.3	3.5	26	26	13	0	100
2022	6.3	35.7	17.5	21	16.8	2.8	100

Table 1.6 provides an insight into the opinions of the survey participants about the utility of social media for their everyday activities in both 2012 and 2022. In 2012, when the social media usage among rural communities was scarce and just began, their contribution to everyday work activity could be considered minimal. Only a relatively few percent of respondents claimed that social media helped them "extremely" (4.3%) or "very much" (3.5%). Most of the respondents were categorized by the terms "moderately" (26%) and "slightly" (26%), meaning that some practical effect was noticeable, but it was limited to some extent. Furthermore, 13% of the respondents claimed that social media did not help them at all in their everyday activities. At that time, no one chose "cannot say" as their answer. All the above mentioned statistics show that social media was seen more as a form of entertainment rather than a functional tool back then.

There have been significant changes in terms of perceptions of usefulness by 2022. More individuals perceive social media as being either "extremely" (6.3%) or "very much" useful (35.7%). There is a considerable shift when compared to 2012. On the other hand, 17.5% feel that it is "moderately" useful while 21% think that it is "slightly" useful in helping them perform daily tasks. An additional 16.8% state that social media does not help them at all. For the very first time, 2.8% of the respondents fall under the "cannot say" category.

It is clear from the increase in the proportion of the "very much" option that by 2022, social media has started aiding rural residents in several aspects like gathering information, obtaining government services, carrying out financial transactions, seeking advice, and problem-solving. On the other hand, the persistence of the "not at all" and "cannot say" options suggests that social media's advantages have not been felt equally by all groups in rural communities.

Table No. 1.7

Reduction of Superstitions and Social Evils (in %)

Reduction of Superstitions and Social Evils / Year	Extremely	Very Much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	Cannot Say	Total
2012	0	17.4	21.7	34.8	26	0	100
2022	5	21	28	24.5	18.2	3.5	100

This is seen by comparing the total number of positive replies (“extremely,” “very much,” and “moderately” together). The results obtained are that around 39.1% of people in 2012 felt that social media was able to play a role in the reduction of superstition and social evils. In 2022, however, this figure increased to 54%, marking an increase of approximately fifteen percent points in the ten years covered. This shows how people have become more convinced over time of the credibility of social media as a means for developing scientific attitudes, exchanging information, and raising awareness about social issues.

Further analysis on partial influence, which is symbolized by “slightly,” demonstrates a reduction in the percentage of partial influence from 34.8% in 2012 to 24.5% in 2022. Such a reduction suggests that there has been an increase in the number of people who previously perceived the power of social media to be insignificant, but now perceive it to be either moderate or significant. Likewise, there has been a reduction in the number of negative perceptions, which refers to people who thought that social media was “not at all” useful for minimizing superstitions and social evils, from 26% in 2012 to 18.2% in 2022.

When considering the element of uncertainty, there were no participants who opted for the “cannot say” response in 2012. In 2022, on the other hand, 3.5% of the survey respondents fell into this category. This indicates that certain individuals have started thinking critically about this matter and are hesitant about expressing whether they feel that social media can have a positive or negative effect. From the results of the study, it can be seen that there is a growing tendency towards favorable perceptions regarding social media and its influence.

Table No. -1.8

Change in Customs / Culture / Traditions due to Social Media

Change in Customs / Culture / Traditions due to Social Media (in percentage)/ Year	Extremely	Very much	Moderately	Slightly	Not at all	Cannot say	Total
2012	11.1	48.14	26	11.1	3.7	0	100
2022	1.4	33.6	24.5	24.5	14	2.1	100

From the statistics shown in Table No.1.8, Social Media has impacted the culture, traditions, and customs in rural societies, although the degree of the impact has varied over time. As at 2012, there were a relatively high number of respondents who thought that social media has had a considerable impact on these factors. More than half of the respondents (58.84%), who viewed that the impact was very much and extremely influential, form a relatively large number compared to those who viewed it as moderate and slight. There were only 3.7 per cent of the respondents who believed that social media did not have any impact on the factors mentioned. The above observations suggest that social media had an influence on rural cultures and traditions during its initial stages of adoption.

In 2022, however, this trend seemed to have changed drastically. The total percentage of those who thought that the role of Social Media was "extremely" (1.4%) and "very much" (33.6%) was now only about 35 percent. However, there was also an increase in "slightly" (24.5%) and "not at all" (14%), with 2.1 percent unsure. This indicates a gradual realization among the rural population that the changes in culture or customs and traditions cannot be entirely associated with social media. Instead, changes in culture and traditions are becoming increasingly linked to various other factors such as economic circumstances, educational status, and social interactions.

Therefore, relative to 2012, social media became less of an influencing factor in 2022 in terms of cultural transformation within rural societies.

FINDINGS

1. While social media was still a new aspect of life for rural communities in 2012, it was motivated mainly by curiosity. However, the same social media became a routine and requirement for daily life by 2022. Besides that, there was an enormous change observed regarding the platforms chosen. While in 2012, the use of Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube was predominant, in 2022, there was a rise in the popularity of visual platforms like YouTube and Instagram. Such changes signify a general shift from a text-based communication system to video-based consumption in rural society. Social media is not just about communicating anymore; it is a medium for acquiring information, entertainment, employment, expressing oneself, and building one's social identity. The changes in platforms have led to significant changes in rural thought processes, behaviors, and social interactions.
2. The shift from text-based platforms to visual media indicates a clear change in the way information is consumed in rural communities.
3. The reasons behind the use of social media have also undergone a transformation. For example, back in 2012, social media was used mainly for reading news, messaging, and communication purposes. However, in 2022, the main activities performed on social media include watching videos, entertainment activities, and listening to music. Although social media is still being used for accessing news and information, its use for academic purposes is still very limited, which clearly indicates that its potential in the field of education has yet to be fully utilized.
4. Although information seeking was more prevalent in 2012, its use for entertainment purposes became predominant in 2022. This implies that social media in rural areas has started to act as an entertainment medium, rather than as an information medium.
5. Social media usage in 2022 has generated greater awareness about a wider range of issues such as health, government schemes, education, and social problems. This trend highlights the increasing social awareness and consciousness among rural residents.
6. The majority of respondents considered social media to be a very influential power in their lives in 2012. By 2022, social media had become just an everyday affair and a usual activity. It shows that the influence associated with the novelty of technology has turned into habituation and balance in its use.
7. The importance of social media for raising awareness was similar in both cases; however, the appearance of the “cannot say” response in 2022 demonstrates that the

excessiveness and complexity of information have led to confusion among some people using social media.

8. It can be noticed that there is an increase in the actual usage of social media for everyday needs in 2022. Now rural individuals can use it not only for entertainment but also as a tool that can provide useful information about agriculture, weather conditions, job opportunities, banks, and government programs.
9. Nowadays, social media tends to solve certain issues and problems. It does not serve only as a communication tool but can also be used for receiving help, guidance, and forming social connections.
10. As far as superstitions and social evils are concerned, a higher percentage of people felt that social media had played an active role in reducing these issues. This is evident from the growing prevalence of science-based thoughts and reforms.
11. As concerns customs, culture, and traditions, social media has been seen by respondents in 2012 as a major catalyst behind cultural change. However, the same respondents in 2022 saw it in perspective, as just one among many other reasons.
12. While social media was viewed as an effective means of bringing about social change in 2012, it was viewed only as a means of communication in 2022. This indicates how social attitudes have evolved from being enthusiastic about social media to accepting it.
13. While there was an increase in awareness regarding superstitions and social evils in 2022, full transformation was not achieved due to the fact that social media alone is unable to bring about such transformation.
14. The cultural influence of social media was more prominent in 2012, while in 2022 it was more controlled and balanced. This means that there is some harmony that has been achieved by rural society in terms of technology and tradition.
15. In 2012, the use of social media was an individual experience. However, in 2022, it has evolved to include communal activities through groups in villages, information sharing, and social platforms.
16. Initially, social media was used on an occasional basis. However, in 2022, it became a regular feature that shaped daily digital behavior.
17. From the comparative perspective, it is evident that social media has facilitated an expansion and development of the rural communication network; thus enhancing information sharing and exchange.
18. In 2012, social media was viewed by rural society as something external. However, in 2022, it has become something necessary within their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

According to the current study's results, social media is now an integral aspect of rural society in Western Uttar Pradesh from 2012 to 2022. The process of information circulation and its speed have drastically changed during this time. Previously, rural societies were heavily dependent on traditional media, which had a slow and sometimes uneven information circulation process. However, with the emergence of social media, it is easier and faster for the villages to receive information about different topics such as news, schemes provided by the government, and employment opportunities.

On the other hand, the research makes it clear that most of the social media usage revolves around entertainment and video consumption rather than education and learning. There is definitely a need for proper digital literacy programs which will help the people make best use of social media for their benefit. By effectively linking social media with educational activities, it can actually become an important tool of rural empowerment.

Socially, social media has had an impact on the breaking down of superstitions and many social evils due to exposure to new thoughts, scientific thinking and various social discussions. Nevertheless, where the issue of culture and tradition arises, the rural society has taken a balanced view. The changes in traditions and rituals have been viewed as a product of various social and economic factors, social media being one among them.

To conclude, it can be said that social media plays an important role as an enabling medium in the rural setting of Western Uttar Pradesh. This effect of social media can be observed in information access and usage, as well as in social awareness. However, in order to fully utilize its positive aspects and minimize any negative effects, there is a definite requirement for policies on enhancing digital literacy and cyber awareness. The current research provides relevant recommendations for those interested in promoting social media usage in rural areas.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The Governmental ministries and welfare agencies must make maximum use of social media in spreading the information regarding health, education and agriculture in clear and comprehensible language so that the benefit goes to the village population directly.

2. Media literacy must be incorporated as a mandatory subject in school and college curriculums to instill responsible usage of social media.
3. Higher emphasis should be placed on creating quality contents online in Indian languages like Hindi and regional dialects as this will keep the rural inhabitants attached to their cultural heritage while engaging with the digital world.
4. Social media could be effectively used for awareness campaigns against social evils and superstitions through science-backed and socially constructive campaigns.
5. The parents and educators must guide the youth regarding social media usage and monitor their activity on social media so as to prevent wastage of time and potential mental harm due to overuse.
6. Setting up digital information centres or community internet centers at the Gram Panchayat level will give the rural populations a regulated platform to interact with social media.
7. Social media should go past its mere function as being entertaining and must be associated with economic empowerment by disseminating information about employment, skills development programs and various welfare schemes launched by the government.
8. Future researchers must not restrict their studies simply on comparing only two points in time. Longitudinal studies must be conducted on the pattern of change in society in order to better understand the process of change in rural societies.
9. Rural women and elders must be provided special training sessions in order to enable them to become adept and confident users of social media.
10. It is necessary that cultural sensitivity be kept in mind while posting or disseminating content on social media so as to prevent the erosion of traditional culture.
11. The policymakers must make relevant digital policies that keep in view the effects of social media on rural society.

In conclusion, rural Social Media should not merely be perceived as an instrument for entertainment purposes only. Rather, Social Media should purposely be used as an instrument of social consciousness and education. With proper regulation, Social Media can play a vital role towards transforming rural societies in positive ways.

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