

# Social-Media Habit of Rural India

Madhurendra Kumar

**Abstract:** *There is a have and have not syndrome in India when it comes to social-media usage. A slight shift is seen when it comes to social media habit of rural chunk. Gradually the rural mass is getting addicted to the digi-trends and this is a positive shift. A lot of research has been done in silos in this context but this paper makes them all in a nutshell.*

**Keywords:** India, Rural, Digital, Social-media, Habit

## 1. Social-media habit of Rural India: Literature Review

### 1.1 Introduction

As per Re-imagining India's M&E sector March 2018, FICCI & EY report India's consumption on digital platform is going to increase vibrantly. Mainstream Smartphone owners are going to be 500 MN by Year-2020 expectedly. The launch of cheap tariff plans from JIO has paved the way for a booming data consumption pattern in developing country like India.

Average monthly data consumption at present is 3.9 GB which is going to increase up to 18 GB by 2023 expectedly (Economic Times dated November 28 2017).

Social networking hulks like Facebook, YouTube, Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Google Plus, Twitter, Skype, LinkedIn Pinterest, Hike and Snapchat are also penetrating all across at a rapid rate.

IAMAI-IMRB report 2017 states that social media is the main reason why people embrace internet first time. Facebook is the leading social media website with 96 per cent of urban people using it (Haokip&Sivakumar, 2017) making India the second largest market for Facebook with over 200 MN user base (Indian express article dated Sunday, February 24, 2019).

Four gratifying factors of Facebook like Social Connection, Social Network Surfing and Wasting Time are important pillar for social-media usage. In future social-media platforms are more to be entertaining apart from socializing (Michail N., Chorianopoulos, Giotopoulos, & Vlamos, 2012).

The most shocking observation is by year 2021 rural is to urban consumption split will be reversed of what it is today. Till 2017 rural and urban internet users were 186 MN and 295 MN respectively which is going to be 429 MN and 400MN respectively by Y-2021 expected (Re-imagining India's M&E sector March 2018, FICCI & EY report, Cisco VNI forecast). This signifies a rampant growth in rural social media usage pattern.

In support of above it is also seen most of the contents now are consumed in Indian language i.e. vernacular and regional language with 93% of the time is used in watching videos in Hindi and local language. Entry of 3G and 4G based video as

well as voice based services has made this process more vibrant enabling rural chunk to be more active on online-social media platforms. (Because English language will not be a hurdle now).

This process backs the philosophy of Rural India as fortune at the bottom of the pyramid when it comes to mobile penetration. Stories of Bishalkhinda villagers more preferring 'wide network coverage', 'easy recharge facility' and 'customer care facility' rather than media/advertising for choosing the service providers are a proof to the same. They are also creating a huge scope for value-added plan because of 7.5 minute/day mobile usage duration at present which is expected to increase rapidly. (Dash & Kumar, 2011).

These reports are suggesting a "sign of change in the digital divide syndrome of India" especially in rural context. But the question remains as to whether these changes are really taking place on ground level if we take Indian rural population as a whole.

### 1.2 The Rural Urban Divide

India is divided in two part i.e. 70% of rural chunk is to 30% of urban chunk. Urban users are too good in making India second after U.S. as per as their Facebook activity is concern (Ghedini, 2013). On the other side rural mass is unable to access the basic necessity of social media like internet, desktop or mobile (Bansal, 2015). This gives rise to "digital have and have-not syndrome" resulting in to economic as well as rural failure in fast changing technology boosted world. Internet access divide, mobile access divide, HRM divide, education divide, linguistic divide and gender divide are few grounds of the same (Malhotra, 2014). Language and localized content are also becoming barriers of Internet usage despite of physical access to the system (Ali, 2009).

These above written findings are consistent with unavailability of sound infrastructure, awareness-level, technical know-how and illiteracy, used to old habits among the rural base making them unfit to social media adoption (Kaur & Singh Marwaha, 2016).

Apart from this Direct network externalities are also seen creating hindrance in Internet acceptance in rural the rural mass. The low adoption of internet may be due to the person to whom one want to communicate may have no access to internet. (Boase, 2010). Privacy concerns, Trust and reliability

Volume 8 Issue 4, April 2019

[www.ijsr.net](http://www.ijsr.net)

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

are also found as a factor why rural people have low online activity and that too within nearby location only.

## 2. Usage aspects in Rural India

It is seen that social media and internet availability help in diverse form to the rural dwellers.

One aspect of this is small world phenomenon (J. watts, 1999) resulting in to socialization process among rural mass. This phenomena is consistent with the findings of other researchers (D. S. Gupta & Bashir, 2018).

Social media is found more as a socializing tool rather than business purpose in a study done to know the impact of social-media and social-networks technologies in developing and rural Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises (SMMEs) in KwaZulu-Natal(Mpele & Lekhanya, 2013).

Study done in the midlands of Ireland especially in context to Facebook also posited the same result that it actually is a rural community forging and elevation tool in itself. This research focused on the Facebook page of one rural community and the complex interrelation between those who use the page and those who do not engage with the technology (Wims, 2015).

Pervasiveness and level of proficiency in internet are seen playing mediating role in use of internet to forge social capital among rural people. These findings are in tune to the theory of glocalization (Wellman, 2001) and networked individualism (Hampton & Wellman, 2003) showcasing people are bonding and bridging their relationship on local and non-local level by mean of social networking.

This social capital building concept subsequently results in more number of participation among different rural chunk except for few like "entrenched" one. These religious groups are not prone to use technology-mail and online platforms. However it can't be stated wrong that localized social ties leading to social sentiment and finally a sense of social responsibility among users (Stern & Adams, 2010).

Creation of trust establishment, social, economic and civic outcomes and opportunities are also taking place by mean of social capital based interactions.(Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000).

In rural farming and industrialization social media has played significant role as seen in the cases of Gramvaani, Sangli Turmeric story and Snapdeal.com nagar. It has enabled farmers to take their decisions smoothly(Bansal, 2015).Entry of this platform has cluttered the significance of mid-man in the sale between the farmer and sabzi mandi. This sales process is backed by mobile-banking and use of internet NGO's like Gram- Vaani in rural area (S. Gupta, 2016).

A new concept known as agricultural journalism has also erupted to be a boon to farmers in pure rural part of India (Miah, 2017).

Few of the farmers are seen using ICT for getting agricultural inputs like commodity arrival, prices and weather. Using internet kiosk for property rate, property registration and online-ticket reservation by them has become a normal day to day activities. (A. Narula & Arora, 2010). This is helping them in e-governance, health and education needs also(A. Narula & Arora, 2010).

Whatsup groups are being made by them to share knowledge regarding day to day happening in panchayat and agriculture (Haokip & Sivakumar, 2017).AGROPEDIA like portals on social-media are also playing a crucial role in the same. Nowthey know the demand and supply of agriculture business on real time basis.

Smiliarlytribal of Elumalai have used social-media in getting their voice for housing facility reach to the corridors of beaurocracy. The DM instantly took the issue of rural people in concern and further proceedings started automatically. It provided a platform where voice and culture of people are taken into consideration which is also evident from Budaun rape case incident where social media tweets and re-tweets created pressure on public administration regarding the atrocities on lower caste people living in down hinterland of India (Miah, 2017).

MGNREGA related activities are also seen in adoption of the same platform at village level and house-hold level in villages of Tamil Nadu. It is empowering panchayat in disseminating the information to different levels of governance and executive bodies involved in MGNREGA scheme. Women beneficiaries in MGNREGA are using online pay wallets and paytm to get their banking possible(Haokip & Sivakumar, 2017).

Social networking helps a ton to student communities too.(D. S. Gupta & Bashir, 2018).

Students showcased the importance of social media for getting on the job apart from reluctance in posting there details on employment portal. They have said social media is second to employment portals for getting the job across geographical proximities. Social media showcase their work ethic and character to the employer (Godair & Dansereau, 2017).

There lies a positive relation between knowledge sharing, habit and obligation and social media usage among South African rural youth. Socializing social media usage among youth makes them gradually addicted and finally obliged to it. They are using it for leisure socializing rather than knowledge sharing or acquisition (Shava & T. Chinyamurindi, 2018).

When it comes to politics social media play an important role in voting behavior of young India in urban and semi-urban area. In rural India still people rely on traditional media. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are main social-media tool for impacting to-be voters. Parties which are more digitally active are more probably winning the election (Biswas, Ingle, & Roy, 2014).

It is found that government is reaching to a particular class of citizen rather than population as a whole on social-media platforms. There should be an integration of government website with social media links. This linking will help in proper implementation of government policy. (Kumar Verma, Kumar, & Vigneswara Ilavarasan, 2017).

India should self-design & customize ICT platform for the rural chunk and implement in diverse contextual basis. Industries as part of their CSR program should come forward to apply ICT based system in rural areas (Malhotra, 2014).

Building an information reach society will pave the way for marring poverty and sustainable development. ICT projects should be customized made in local language, local content, focusing local needs, low cost, long term based and participatory one (Subba Rao, 2004).

It can help in maintaining rural youth aspiration, smart-cities and smart villages (Fennell, Kaur, Jhunjhunwala, Narayanan, & Loyola, 2018).

However social media is not widely accepted as per as India as a whole is concerned (Lathiya, Rathod, & Choudhary, 2015).

### 3. Gap in literature

There is a dearth of data related to holistic social media activity in rural chunk. A more thorough study is needed as most of the study is done on small sample and in a homogeneous group. These past studies are unable to generate more validated social-media habit output in country like India. Studies (Haokip & Sivakumar, 2017; Kumar Verma et al., 2017) have not checked the viability of their finding on pan-India basis. These researches are lagging behind in ground-level data. Many researchers have addressed different grounds of digital divide but not a single paper has quoted the effect of same on social-media usage in rural segment.

In most of the research partial work is done to achieve the objective. For instance effect of community attachment by e-mail is observed but what about other form of media like Facebook and whatsapp. (As Facebook is more real time interaction based social media tool)

We should measure till what level localized social ties leads to social responsibility because the purpose of social media activity is not known i.e. whether for a casual chit-chat or some serious concern. Research is to be done in knowing how much people are active on the social media portals linked with government sites.

Study done in South-African countries found there exists positive correlation between English and Internet development. So, does it apply to Indian rural areas also? It is topic to be pondered upon. Whether this is the only reason why people are less frequent on social media in Indian countryside.

If yes then what about the fact that Gboard consists of 22 Indian languages apart from voice search and Facebook adding 12 native Indian languages of India. To check the validity of translation content in cultural context is also an issue which past research has posited (Ali, 2009).

In a research it was said traditional media is playing crucial role in rural area which is a point of investigation in partially digitally active rural India (IAMAI-IMRB report 2017).

Women online-activity outpacing men counterpart in rural India is point of further research. Lifestyle of people need to be studied and technology intervention for them as per as rural factor is concern.

Do social-media helps in making a potential democracy? This is to be researched specially in context to rural part of India as most of the India belongs to semi-urban and rural base. In a research (Bansal, 2015) it is found that rural politics and its slow pace in relation to social media but lacked in the exact figure. I strongly feel to investigate the role of social media in rural politics of villages in India like Gram panchayat election and Loksabha elections (to be held in 2019).

Here needs some observation and study as India is a “country of democracy” as envisaged by Abraham Lincoln’s of being an institution ‘of the people, by the people and for the people’.

Research (Gilbert, Karahalios, & Sandvig, 2010) found that American culture is pastoral idyll which is to be validated in Indian rural scenario also. We have to see whether they want to join hands with the outer world of technology, science and modern culture by mean of social-media or not.

In a research done by (Stern & Adams, 2010) it was found entrenched religious groups are not interested to join online social groups. So, does the same philosophy applies to Indian entrenched religious groups also? If yes then can’t they be mobilized and how? This is a point of study in itself.

Individuality of content posting in rural Indian context is a point of study because rural India is known for its social norm and customs.

Studies done by (Stern & Adams, 2010) is lacking in impact of online social bond on different social capital facets of Putnam’s (1993). We should see how online-groups are forging the social-capital facets in society.

In previous studies lack of interest, skill, local content and serious issues like barriers were seen in context to slow pace of social media in developing countries. So, these factors should be taken in to consideration while observing the Indian rural mass.

In the past studies like social-media and Indian higher education based (D. S. Gupta & Bashir, 2018) the political construct should not be unmined as per the past research (Gash, 2012).

Existence of other online social media apart from agricultural journalism is to be checked in rural areas.

Study is needed to know the use of social media for different government agricultural schemes and offers to farmers like Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) an National mission for sustainable agriculture (NMSA) apart from status of social media linkage to agricultural departments.

Significance of online social media in generating employment and skill building among rural youth is an area itself to be studied upon. It will reveal deeper idea about habitual social media usage, obligations and social media, as well as sharing of knowledge social media among them.

Network, dynamics and small world phenomenon based motivational factors and their impact to be studied in Indian context. How social-capital and marginalizing minority group all these are area to be studied in Indian rural context. So, in a nutshell we may say social-media habit of rural people in India is an area yet to be investigated.

#### 4. Conclusion

Future research will identify the socio-economic profile of rural user group, needs, potential strata, cost-bearing capacity and relevancy of information they need to have in context to social media. ICT user's base, attitude and their trust in social-media platform is also to be studied as ICT is playing a crucial role in making the country tech-savvy. A PESTEL analysis based research to be done which will help in knowing the macro picture of village social media habit pattern.

It will enable the rural India to run parallel to the pan India at the same pace. It will help in farming, education, industry, health, business, infrastructure, political, cultural and moral upliftment of rural India as a whole. It will overall try to bridge the gap between tech-savvy urban India and its rural counterpart. Overall, this research will be strategically beneficial in making rural chunk to be more nearer to outer-world via social-media like digital platform and get revamped.

#### References

- [1] A. Narula, S., & Arora, S. (2010). Identifying stakeholders' needs and constraints in adoption of ICT services in rural areas: the case of India. *Emerald Group Publishing*, 6(2), 222–236. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17471111011051739>
- [2] Ali, A. H. (2009). The Power of Social Media in Developing Nations: New Tools for Closing the Global Digital Divide and Beyond, 24.
- [3] Anand, R. (2018). *Re-imagining India's M&E sector March 2018, FICCI & EY report* (pp. 105–123). Retrieved from <https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-re-imagining-indias-me-sector-march-2018/%24File/ey-re-imagining-indias-me-sector-march-2018.pdf>
- [4] Bansal, E. (2015). IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON RURAL INDIA. *Meghana Publications*, 4(3,2015), 201–207.
- [5] Biswas, A., Ingle, N., & Roy, M. (2014). Influence of Social Media on Voting Behavior. *American Research Institute for Policy Development*, 2(2), 127–155.
- [6] Boase, J. (2010). The Consequences of Personal Networks for Internet Use in Rural Areas. *SAGE Publishing*, 53(9), 1257–1267.
- [7] Dash, A., & Kumar, S. (2011). Understanding Users of Mobile Services in Rural Area: A Case of Bishalkhinda Village in Odisha, *X*(2), 54–63.
- [8] Falk, I., & Kilpatrick, S. (2000). What is Social Capital? A Study of Interaction in a Rural Community. *Blackwell Publishers*, 40(1), 87–110.
- [9] Fennell, S., Kaur, P., Jhunjunwala, A., Narayanan, D., & Loyola, C. (2018). Examining linkages between Smart Villages and Smart Cities: Learning from rural youth accessing the internet in India., *42*(10), 810–823.
- [10] Gash, N. A. (2012). Political Instability in the J&K State From the Past Two Decades and its Impact on Education System-A study(1989-2011). *Marsland Press*.
- [11] Gilbert, E., Karahalios, K., & Sandvig, C. (2010). The Network in the Garden: Designing Social Media for Rural Life. *SAGE Publishing*, 53(9), 1367–1388. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210361690>
- [12] Godair, B. W., & Dansereau, E. C. (2017). IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO RURAL COLLEGE STUDENTS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT, *11*(2), 23–30.
- [13] Gupta, D. S., & Bashir, L. (2018). SOCIAL NETWORKING USAGE QUESTIONNAIRE: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION IN AN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT, *19*(4), 214–227.
- [14] Gupta, S. (2016). A STUDY ON: IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT, 66–67.
- [15] Haokip, D. S., & Sivakumar, D. (2017). Advantages of Social Networking in MGNREGA: An Analysis of Village Panchayat in Tamil Nadu. *IJCRT*, 5(11), 58–69.
- [16] IAMAI, & IMRB. (2017). *IAMAI, Internet and Mobile Association Of India, 2017, Mobile Internet Report, KANTAR-IMRB*. Retrieved from <https://cms.iamai.in/Content/ResearchPapers/2b08cce4-e571-4cfe-9f8b-86435a12ed17.pdf>
- [17] J. watts, D. (1999). Network ,dynamics and small world phenomenon. *The University of Chicago Press*, 105(2), 493–527. <https://doi.org/10.1086/210318>
- [18] Kaur, S., & Singh Marwaha, D. A. (2016). Digital Media Reach: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban People in India, *4*(7), 5553–5562. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18535/ijrsr/v4i07.03>
- [19] Kumar Verma, R., Kumar, S., & Vigneswara Ilavarasan, P. (2017). Government portals, social media platforms and citizen engagement in India: Some insights. *Elsevier B.V.*, 122, 842–849.
- [20] Lathiya, A., Rathod, A., & Choudhary, K. (2015). Role of social media in agriculture, *8*(2), 268–273. <https://doi.org/10.15740/HAS/IJCBM/8.2/268-273>



- [21] Malhotra, C. (2014). Bridging Digital Divide : Special Emphasis on Rural India, *55*(3), 276–285.
- [22] Miah, A. S. (2017). Impact of Social Media on Tribal. *Renu Publishers*, *5*(1), 5–9.
- [23] Michail N., G., Chorianopoulos, K., Giotopoulos, K., & Vlamos, P. (2012). Using Facebook out of habit. *Taylor and Francis*, *32*(6), 594–602.
- [24] Mpele Lekhanya, L. (2013). The Use of Social Media and Social Networks as the Promotional Tool for Rural Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, *3*(7), 1–7.
- [25] Shava, H., & T. Chinyamurindi, W. (2018). Determinants of social media usage among a sample of rural South African youth. *AOSIS Publishing*, *20*(1), 1–8.
- [26] Stern, M. J., & Adams, A. E. (2010). Do Rural Residents Really Use the Internet to Build Social Capital? An Empirical Investigation. *SAGE Publications*, *53*(9), 1389–1422. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764210361692>
- [27] Subba Rao, S. (2004). Role of ICTs in India's rural community information systems. *Emerald Group Publishing Limited*, *4*(6), 261–269.
- [28] Wims, P. (2015). The Potential of Social Media as a Communication Tool in Rural Community Development. *IGI Global*, 475–500. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8598-7.ch020>