SOCIAL MEDIA

The Impact of Social Media on Cultural Identity Among Indian Youth

Manasvi Mahendra Rathod

Department of Computer Applications, Suryadatta Institute of Management and Mass Communication, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Published November 2026

Abstract

Social media platforms have become integral to the daily lives of Indian youth, serving as primary channels for communication, entertainment, education, and cultural exchange. This study investigates the impact of social media usage on the cultural identity of Indian youth across six key dimensions: platform usage patterns, awareness of Indian traditions, shifts in traditional values and lifestyles, exposure to global cultures, cultural preservation, and the negotiation between traditional and modern influences. Employingadescriptive,quantitativeresearchdesign, primary data were collected via a structured questionnaire from $_{n = 153}$ respondents between September and October 2026. Frequency distributions, percentage analyses, and a Pearson Chi-Square test of independence were conducted. Descriptive findings reveal that WhatsApp (81.05%), YouTube (80.39%), and Instagram (79.08%)dominateyouthengagement, with60.13% spending two or more hours daily online. A majority of respondents perceive that social media enhances their cultural awareness (60.78%), fosters interest in traditional clothing, food, music, and art (60.13%), aids cultural preservation (62.09%), and increases exposure to foreign cultures (58.17%), while 60.78% continue practicing traditional customs despite peer pressure toward Western lifestyles (56.86%). However, the Chi-Square test between cultural content exposure frequency and perceived awareness yielded $\chi^2(4) = 6.551$ ($p = 0.162$), indicating no statistically significant association within the sample. Consequently, Indian youth exhibit a pattern of selective cultural hybridization—maintaining core traditions while integrating global digital trends.

Keywords: Cultural Awareness; Cultural Identity; Digital Media; Global Culture; Indian Youth; Social Media; Traditional Values

1 Introduction

Social media has transformed contemporary communication, information dissemination, and cultural interaction among young people in India. Platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook enable youth to exchange ideas, consume multimedia content, and participate in digital communities across geographic boundaries. Because India encompasses immense linguistic, religious, and regional diversity, cultural identity—anchored in traditional attire, cuisine, festivals, folk arts, regional languages, and family structures—plays a central role in shaping an individual's sense of belonging.

Digital networking sites act simultaneously as repositories of indigenous heritage and conduits for globalized lifestyles. On one hand, young users share festival celebrations, traditional recipes, classical and folk music, and regional customs with nationwide and international audiences. On the other hand, continuous algorithmic exposure to Western and global consumer trends influences youth preferences in fashion, entertainment, language, and social norms. Understanding whether

social media reinforces cultural roots or accelerates cultural displacement is therefore essential for educators, parents, and sociologists.

The primary problem addressed in this paper is evaluating how social media engagement shapes the cultural identity of Indian youth and how young individuals balance traditional Indian values against global digital influences. Specifically, this research pursues six core objectives: (1) to analyze social media platform preferences and daily usage duration; (2) to examine how social media affects awareness of Indian culture, traditions, and festivals; (3) to assess its influence on traditional values, family roles, and lifestyle preferences; (4) to evaluate the effects of exposure to foreign cultures and global trends; (5) to determine whether digital platforms facilitate the preservation and promotion of Indian heritage; and (6) to investigate how Indian youth reconcile traditional customs with modern lifestyles.

2 Literature review

Prior scholarship on digital youth culture in India highlights a dynamic interplay between online self-presentation, algorithmic curation, and offline social structures. Katevarapu and Date [1] demonstrated that Indian youth aged 16–26 actively negotiate regional, aspirational, and cultural identities across platforms, employing code-switching rather than abandoning local traditions. Similarly, Motilal and Roy [2] emphasized that social media algorithms and influencers actively curate cultural visibility, shaping which practices gain mainstream youth traction.

Sociological investigations across urban and semi-urban India reveal that digital media interacts closely with established familial and community institutions. Pathak-Shelat and DeShano [3] found that youth in small-town and rural Gujarat integrate digital expression within enduring collective family structures. In metropolitan contexts, Sarwatay and Raman [4] observed that young people exercise deliberate agency in managing online presence alongside family and educational expectations, while Advani [5], [6] showed that Facebook practices among young men in Pune extend offline kinship, urban status, and local social visibility.

Researchers have also documented dual cultural outcomes—ranging from empowerment and hybridization to cultural disconnect. Kumar [7] noted that mobile social networking expands participatory agency among socioeconomically disadvantaged urban youth, whereas Chattopadhyay and Mohanty [8] identified generational cultural disconnect among Lodha tribal youth exposed to urbanized media content. Studies by Majumdar et al. [9] and Dinker [10] illustrate that online spaces both reinforce and challenge traditional gender and socialization norms. Furthermore, systematic and empirical syntheses by Avci et al. [11], Pegu and Gogoi [12], Vijayalakshmi [13], and Awal [14] indicate that active, authentic participation supports identity clarity, whereas passive social comparison can induce lifestyle pressure. Despite these valuable contributions, comprehensive empirical assessments covering multiple cultural dimensions simultaneously—spanning awareness, festival participation, family values, global trend adoption, and heritage preservation—remain limited.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Research design and sampling

This study adopts a descriptive, quantitative research design to systematically measure social media usage patterns and cultural identity perceptions among Indian youth. Primary data were collected between September 29, 2026, and October 17, 2026, using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Employing non-probability convenience sampling, a total of $_{n = 153}$ valid responses were obtained across diverse age brackets and occupational categories. Participation was strictly voluntary; personally identifiable details (names and email addresses) were collected solely for record verification and kept confidential. For the 21 minor respondents aged 13–17 years (13.73%), participation was subject to parental or guardian consent, with the right to withdraw at any stage.

3.2 Variables and hypothesis formulation

The independent variable in this investigation is social media usage, operationalized through platform selection, daily time spent online, and frequency of exposure to cultural content. The dependent variable is cultural identity, encompassing awareness of Indian traditions, lifestyle choices, attitudes toward family values, openness to global cultures, and active preservation of Indian customs. To statistically evaluate whether content exposure translates into heightened cultural awareness, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant association between the frequency of exposure to Indian cultural content on social media and awareness of Indian culture and traditions.

Alternative Hypothesis (H1): There is a significant association between the frequency of exposure to Indian cultural content on social media and awareness of Indian culture and traditions.

3.3 Data analysis techniques

All responses were cleaned, verified for completeness, and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages (calculated relative to $_{n = 153}$), were compiled alongside visual charts. For multiple-response items (platforms used, reasons for use, and cultural content types), percentages reflect the proportion of total respondents selecting each option and therefore exceed 100% cumulatively. To test H_0 at the $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level, a Pearson Chi-Square test of independence was computed using

$$\chi^2 = \Sigma \frac{(O - E)^2}{E} \tag{1}$$

where $_O$ and $_E$ denote observed and expected cell frequencies, respectively.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Table 1 summarizes the demographic distribution of the 153 survey participants. Young adults aged 21–25 years constitute the largest cohort at 54.25% (83 respondents), followed by individuals aged 30 and above (20.26%), 13–17 years (13.73%), 18–20 years (10.46%), and 26–29 years (1.31%). Female respondents account for 55.56% (85), males represent 43.79% (67), and 0.65% (1) preferred

not to disclose gender. Occupationally, full-time students form the majority at 60.78% (93), alongside working professionals (19.61

4.2 Social media usage patterns (Objective 1)

As detailed in Table 2, WhatsApp (81.05%), YouTube (80.39%), and Instagram (79.08%) are the dominant platforms used regularly by respondents, each engaging roughly four-fifths of the sample. Snapchat and LinkedIn are each utilized by 37.91%, whereas Facebook (15.03

4.3 Cultural awareness, values, global exposure, and preservation (Objectives 2–6)

Across Objective 2, 83.66% of participants encounter Indian cultural content on social media at least sometimes (45.10% sometimes, 32.03% often, 6.54% very often), whereas only 13.73% see it rarely and 2.61% never. The most frequently viewed cultural themes are Indian cuisine (79.08%), festivals and celebrations (77.12

Table 1. Demographic profile of survey respondents (n = 153).

Demographic Category	Count	Share (%)
Age: 13–17 years	21	13.73
Age: 18–20 years	16	10.46
Age: 21–25 years	83	54.25
Age: 26–29 years	2	1.31
Age: 30 and above	31	20.26
Gender: Female	85	55.56
Gender: Male	67	43.79
Gender: Prefer not to say	1	0.65
Occupation: Student	93	60.78
Occupation: Working professional	30	19.61
Occupation: Other	13	8.50
Occupation: Student & working	10	6.54
Occupation: Self-employed	7	4.58
Total	153	100.00

Table 2. Social media platforms, daily duration, and usage motives.

Platform / Duration / Motive	Count	Share (%)
Platform: WhatsApp	124	81.05
Platform: YouTube	123	80.39
Platform: Instagram	121	79.08
Platform: Snapchat	58	37.91
Platform: LinkedIn	58	37.91
Platform: Facebook	23	15.03

Platform / Duration / Motive	Count	Share (%)
Platform: X (formerly Twitter)	11	7.19
Platform: Other / ShareChat	12	7.84
Daily Time: Less than 1 hour	19	12.42
Daily Time: 1–2 hours	42	27.45
Daily Time: 2–3 hours	48	31.37
Daily Time: 3–4 hours	22	14.38
Daily Time: More than 4 hours	22	14.38
Motive: Entertainment	122	79.74
Motive: Education & information	115	75.16
Motive: Family & peer communication	107	69.93
Motive: News & current affairs	77	50.33
Motive: Business or career	50	32.68
Motive: Fashion & lifestyle	49	32.03
Motive: Exploring cultures	39	25.49

Note. Multiple selections permitted for platforms and motives; all percentages are based on n =153.

Table 3. Perceived effects of social media on cultural identity dimensions (n = 153).

Survey Item Cultural Dimension	Agree*	Neutral	Disagree*
Increased cultural awareness	60.78%	27.45%	11.76%
Discovered unfamiliar traditions	54.90%	33.99%	11.11%
Encourages festival participation	47.71%	34.64%	17.65%
Influenced identity expression	30.72%	50.33%	18.95%
Interest in Indian at-tire/food/art	60.13%	31.37%	8.50%
Influenced traditional value views	43.79%	39.87%	16.34%
Influenced family role perceptions	37.91%	47.06%	15.03%
Traditional practices declining	58.82%	32.03%	9.15%
Exposure to foreign cultures	58.17%	37.25%	4.58%
Foreign impact on lifestyle choices	41.18%	37.25%	21.57%
Trends shape aesthetic preferences	53.59%	32.68%	13.73%
Adopts foreign cultural trends	36.60%	30.72%	32.68%
Openness to cultural differences	54.90%	34.64%	10.46%
Blends Indian & global influences	49.67%	35.95%	14.38%
Comfortable expressing identity	58.17%	30.07%	11.76%
Connects across Indian regions	60.13%	30.72%	9.15%

Survey Item Cultural Dimension	Agree*	Neutral	Disagree*
Preserves & promotes traditions	62.09%	28.76%	9.15%
Follows customs despite SM use	60.78%	32.03%	7.19%
Pressure for Western lifestyle	56.86%	30.72%	12.42%

Note. *Agree combines Strongly Agree + Agree; Disagree combines Disagree + Strongly Disagree.

Cultural Awareness and Participation (Objective 2): A clear majority (60.78%) agree or strongly agree that social media enhances their awareness of Indian culture and traditions, and 54.90% report discovering previously unfamiliar traditions online. Nearly half (47.71%) feel encouraged to participate in festivals and cultural events, while 34.64% remain neutral.

Traditional Values and Lifestyle Choices (Objective 3): While 60.13% report heightened interest in traditional Indian clothing, food, music, and art, fewer respondents report shifts in deeper value systems: 43.79% note an influence on thinking about traditional values, 37.91% on family roles and relationships, and 30.72% on personal cultural identity expression (where 50.33% remain neutral). Nevertheless, 58.82% perceive that changing digital lifestyles are reducing the salience of certain traditional practices among peers.

Global Cultural Exposure (Objective 4): Social media substantially broadens cross-cultural visibility, with 58.17% reporting increased exposure to cultures outside India, 54.90% reporting greater openness to cultural differences, and 53.59% acknowledging trend-driven influences on fashion, food, and entertainment preferences. However, behavioral adoption is more selective: only 41.18% report foreign influence on broader lifestyle choices, and respondents are closely divided on adopting foreign cultural trends (36.60% agree vs. 32.68% disagree).

Cultural Preservation and Hybrid Balance (Objectives 5 & 6): Respondents overwhelmingly view social media as supportive of cultural continuity: 62.09% believe it helps preserve and promote Indian traditions, 60.13% state it connects them with people across diverse Indian regions, and 58.17% feel comfortable expressing their Indian identity online. Crucially, 60.78% continue practicing traditional customs despite active social media engagement, even though 56.86% recognize peer pressure to adopt Western or modern lifestyles. Overall, 47.71% characterize social media's net impact on their cultural identity as neutral, 47.06% as positive (33.33% somewhat positive, 13.73% very positive), and only 5.23% as somewhat negative (0% very negative).

4.4 Hypothesis testing: Chi-square analysis

To determine whether self-reported cultural awareness varies significantly with the frequency of viewing Indian cultural content, a 3 × 3 contingency table was constructed (Table 4). Adjacent categories were merged ('Rarely' and 'Never'; 'Often' and 'Very often'; 'Strongly Agree' with 'Agree'; and 'Strongly Disagree' with 'Disagree') to ensure adequate expected cell counts.

Table 4. Observed frequencies: Content exposure vs. cultural awareness.

Exposure Frequency	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
Rarelyornever	12 (48.0%)	7 (28.0%)	6 (24.0%)	25
Sometimes	42 (60.9%)	18 (26.1%)	9 (13.0%)	69

Exposure Frequency	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
Oftenormore	39 (66.1%)	17 (28.8%)	3 (5.1%)	59
Total	93	42	18	153

Note. Row percentages shown in parentheses. Pearson $\chi^2 = 6.551$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.162$ (minimum expected cell frequency = 2.94).

As reflected in Table 4, perceived cultural awareness rises monotonically with exposure frequency—from 48.0% among those rarely or never exposed, to 60.9% among those exposed sometimes, and 66.1% among those exposed often or very often. However, the Pearson Chi-Square test yields $\chi^2_{= 6.551}$ with df = 4 and a two-sided p-value of 0.162 (minimum expected frequency $_{= 2.94}$). An uncollapsed four-level exposure sensitivity check produces a consistent result ($\chi^2 = 9.717$, df = 6, p = 0.137). Because p > 0.05, the null hypothesis ($_{H0}$) is not rejected. Thus, while a majority of respondents subjectively perceive that social media enhances cultural awareness, the sample does not provide statistically significant evidence of a frequency-dependent association.

5 Limitations and future scope

Several methodological constraints contextualize these findings. First, the sample size (n = 153) was obtained via convenience sampling and is skewed toward students (60.78%) and young adults aged 21–25 (54.25%), limiting generalizability across all Indian states and rural demographics. Second, reliance on self-reported survey data captures subjective perceptions rather than longitudinal behavioral shifts, and modest cell counts constrained statistical power in contingency testing. Future studies should incorporate probability sampling across diverse urban and rural regions, apply mixed-method interviews alongside multivariate modeling, and examine platform-specific algorithmic effects (e.g., short-form video reels versus regional-language networks) on intergenerational value transmission.

6 Conclusions

This study examined the multifaceted influence of social media on the cultural identity of Indian youth based on empirical survey data from 153 respondents. The findings demonstrate that high daily engagement on platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram exposes youth to both indigenous heritage and global lifestyle trends. Most respondents report that social media increases their awareness of Indian traditions (60.78%), stimulates interest in traditional cuisine, attire, music, and arts (60.13%), and supports cultural preservation (62.09%). Simultaneously, exposure to international content fosters openness to cultural diversity (54.90%) alongside perceived peer pressure to adopt Western lifestyles (56.86%). Crucially, 60.78% of participants continue observing traditional Indian customs, and overall perceived impact is overwhelmingly neutral-to-positive (94.77% combined). Although Chi-Square analysis (p = 0.162) indicates that perceived awareness does not differ significantly across exposure frequencies in this sample, the descriptive evidence underscores that Indian youth actively negotiate a hybrid cultural identity—leveraging digital tools to celebrate and preserve their heritage while selectively engaging with global modernity.

Acknowledgment

The authors sincerely thank the faculty and administration of Suryadatta Institute of Management and Mass Communication (SIMMC), Savitribai Phule Pune University, for their academic support and

guidance, as well as all 153 survey participants who contributed their valuable perspectives to this research.

References

[1] S. Katevarapu and A. Date, "Social media platforms and identity construction among Indian youth: A sociocultural analysis," *Sanchar Sutra*, 2026.

[2] R. Motilal and R. Roy, "Algorithmic mediation of youth culture: The cultural influence of social media marketing on Indian youth," *Adv*. Consum. Res., 2026.

[3] M. Pathak-Shelat and C. DeShano, "Digital youth cultures in small town and rural Gujarat, India," *New Media Soc*., vol. 16, no. 6, pp. 983–1001, 2014.

[4] D. Sarwatay and U. Raman, "Everyday negotiations in managing presence: Young people and social media in India," *Inf*. Commun. Soc., vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 536–551, 2022.

[5] R. Advani, "Maps, movements and mobilities: Facebook and 'checking-in' *among young men in Pune*, India," Space Polity, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 60–76, 2019.

[6] R. Advani, "Brothers, friends, and enemies: Averting intimacy on Facebook in western India," *J. R*. Anthropol. Inst., vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 938–955, 2022.

[7] N. Kumar, "Facebook for self-empowerment? A study of Facebook adoption in urban India," *New Media Soc*., vol. 16, no. 7, pp. 1122–1137, 2014.

[8] K. Chattopadhyay and S. Mohanty, "New media and cultural disconnect: A study on the Lodha tribal community of India," *Asian J*. Soc. Sci., vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 137–146, 2022.

[9] S. Majumdar, M. Tewatia, D. Jamkhedkar, and K. Bhatia, "'You don'*t know me so don't try to judge me': Gender and identity performance on social media among young Indian users*," Front. Psychol., vol. 13, Art. no. 855947, 2022.

[10] N. Dinker, "Impact of social media on youth in the context of the culture of India: A sociological analysis," *Int*. J. Novel Res. Dev., vol. 8, no. 8, pp. a625–a632, 2023.

[11] H. Avci, L. Baams, and T. Kretschmer, "A systematic review of social media use and adolescent identity development," *Adolesc*. Res. Rev., vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 219–236, 2025.

[12] N. M. Pegu and S. Gogoi, "Impact of social media on youth identity and socialization," *Int*. J. Multidiscip. Res., vol. 7, no. 2, Art. no. 40369, 2025.

[13] G. Vijayalakshmi, "Impact of social media on the social behaviours of Indian youth," *Int*. J. Res. Rev., vol. 12, no. 7, pp. 364–372, 2025.

[14] A. Awal, "To speak as another: Hacking, ghost-writing and the dark side of kinship on Indian social media," *HAU: J*. Ethnogr. Theory, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 714–728, 2025.