



# SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND LIFESTYLE CHANGES AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra25677>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra25677

## ABSTRACT

The high spread of digital technologies and social media platforms has had a major impact on the shift in communication patterns and way of life in any given society including the traditional marginalized tribal societies. As more tribal populations become more accessible to smartphones and mobile internet, tribal populations become more active on social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, which gradually alter the routine, socialization, culture, and consumption. The current paper assesses the scope and trends of the use of social media and evaluates its effectiveness in causing a lifestyle shift among the tribal groups in the Araku district of Andhra Pradesh. The data were analyzed by a structured questionnaire with 200 tribal respondents, and a descriptive analysis, regression analysis and ANOVA with one way were used to analyze the data. The results indicate that the use of social media by the tribal society is moderate yet significantly and positively affecting lifestyle change in general. The dimension-wise outcomes show that the consumption behavior and daily routines are the most affected, then social interactions, and cultural practices. It is concluded in the study that social media is a significant source of lifestyle change within tribal groups and therefore that culturally sensitive digital literacy programs and policy interventions that prioritize technological development without interfering with local cultural identity should be provided.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Media Use, Tribal Society, Lifestyle Management, Digital Inclusion.

## INTRODUCTION

The high growth of digital technologies and social media sites has changed the social interaction, pattern of communication and lifestyle habits throughout the world. Over the past few years, there has been an increasing penetration of the impact of digital media even in geographically isolated and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Of these communities, tribal communities, who have traditionally been defined by small social units, oral cultures and subsistence lifestyles, are becoming more and more active in the social media with mobile telephones and the internet connection. This increasing digital presence has brought great transformation in everyday lives, cultures, consumer behavior, social interactions and identity development in tribal cultures. These social media sites have emerged as the most popular means of sharing information, entertainment, education, and social network in the rural and tribal regions, through WhatsApp, facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. This transition has been supported by the affordability of smartphones and the development of mobile internet infrastructure (Gupta & Raina, 2016). Although social media provides a platform to gain empowerment, awareness, and inclusivity, there is a concern of cultures eroding, lifestyle changing, and identity conflict especially among tribal youth (Gogoi, 2019). Digital literacy is a significant factor in determining the relationship between the tribal communities and social media. Alam and Imran (2021)

point out that even though rural and tribal groups in India have begun accessing digital platforms in large numbers, digital disparities, language barriers, and awareness remain some of the factors limiting meaningful and effective use. To tribal communities, use of social media initially works as a source of entertainment and then slowly up to communication, seeking information, and getting involved in wider socio-political discussion. This shift drastically changes the manner of time, social life and the lifestyles changing with the old communal ways in some cases being substituted by the screen-based interaction.

ICTs have been advertised as a means of tribal development, with a view to increasing the accessibility of education, healthcare, governments, and markets. Banerjee and Dey (2019) believe that ICT interventions can close the development gaps in tribal areas; yet, they have multifaceted social implications. Although digital connectivity enhances the accessibility of external knowledge systems, the new cultural forces are perceived and they transform aspirations, consumption patterns and societal values. The exposure to urban lifestyles, modern fashion, consumer goods and other value systems is hastened through social media, which causes progressive changes in lifestyles among the tribal households. Gender issues also complicate the digital transformation in the tribal regions. Bedi and Chhachhi (2018) emphasize that access to digital communication and the use of



social media among tribal communities is thoroughly gendered, as women are limited in their mobility, access to devices and digital competencies, and social expectations. Nevertheless, tribal women have started to find new arenas of expression, learning and networking in social media, which has quietly shifted gender roles and patriarchal relationships. Nonetheless, the incidence of unequal access can also strengthen the social disparities that exist in the tribal societies.

Culturally, social media has a very strong influence on identity among tribal youths. As it is noted by Choudhury and Jha (2017), rural young people become the negotiators between the conservative cultural background and the contemporary digital experience of exposure to social media. Being exposed to dominant culture narratives usually poses a problem of identity especially to the tribal youths who want to have a social presence at the same time not losing their indigenous culture. The same issue is reflected by Carlson and Frazer (2020), who indicate that indigenous people around the world utilize social media as a platform to revitalize culture and at the same time as a platform to struggle over identity and politics and representation. According to several studies, social media also leads to an identity crisis among tribal young people as their cultural content is receiving homogenized messages and a desired lifestyle is being disseminated (Gogoi, 2019; Varghese and Raj, 2018). The influence of change towards dressing, language, food habits, leisure work and even the relationship between people is becoming very apparent in the tribal areas. Specifically, Sharma and Meena (2020) report about language attrition in tribal people in Rajasthan but attribute a portion of it to an exposure to dominant languages via the digital media platform. This kind of changes poses the question of whether the indigenous languages and culture can be maintained in the long run. It also offers avenues to cultural preservation, narration and mobilization. Through the digital platforms, the tribal communities can also document their traditions, disseminate indigenous knowledge, and create awareness on the rights and development concerns (Dutta, 2015; Carlson and Frazer, 2020). The example of such organizations as Digital Empowerment Foundation (2022) and Moinee Foundation (2022) shows that, given properly organized digital interventions, education, livelihood development, and social inclusion in tribal belts can be possible provided that the latter is culturally sensitive and inclusive. The social media usage by tribal students and young people has been further triggered by education and digital learning programs. Joshi and Singh (2020) emphasize the opportunities and challenges of the use of ICT in tribal education, pointing out that digital exposure changes the way of learning, career goals, and expectations of an improved lifestyle. Kumar and Kumari (2021) highlight that tribal contexts are unique and need digital media literacy programs that can enhance the use of social media as the ruler of personal growth instead of the passive consumer.

The empirical studies carried out in various parts of India employing similar research designs prove that social media has emerged as a major agent of lifestyle change among the tribal

people. In their research of the tribal blocks in Rajasthan, Meena and Yadav (2022) observe that the media exposure has impacted their occupational decisions, social consciousness, consumption, and the communication pattern. Equally, Miah (2017) documents that social media has an impact on social relationship, cultural values, and youth behavior in tribal societies, which brings both developmental prospects and risks to culture. Although there is an increased number of literature on the concept of digital inclusion and rural media adoption, there is also little research under empirical analysis on social media adoption and lifestyle alteration within tribes. The majority of the available literature considers ICT adoption, digital literacy, or youth behavior in the rural setting without thoroughly attributing the patterns of social media usage to lifestyle change in tribal settings. It is necessary to have a systematic inquiry concerning the influence of social media on the day to day activities, interpersonal relationships, cultural patterns, consumption patterns, and values of the tribal communities. In this regard, the current research aims to observe the characteristics of the social media use by tribal populations and evaluate its influence on lifestyle modification. The proposed research attempts to add to the growing body of knowledge regarding the digital transformation and indigenous societies by incorporating sociological, cultural, and developmental viewpoints. These dynamics should be understood in formulating comprehensive inclusive digital policies and interventions that balance the growth in technological development and cultural maintenance and sustainable growth of the tribal communities.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social media and digital technologies have been rapidly developing and infiltrating rural and tribal areas, causing their apparent alterations of the communication patterns, their social interactions, and their lifestyle. With improved mobile connectivity and the availability of the intelligent smart phones, tribal communities, which, traditionally, had high levels of cultural identities, indigenous knowledge systems, and community based lifestyles are now increasingly exposed to the social media platform. Although social media presents possibilities in accessing information, education, and inclusion in society, it also brings new values, consumption habits, and behavioral forces that can change the traditional lifestyles, cultural activities, use of language, and social interactions, especially among tribal youths. Although increased efforts are being made to include people digitally, there is a dearth of empirical research that systematically observes the association between use of social media and lifestyle change among tribal populations. The absence of such research concentration leaves a gap in knowledge on the positive as well as the negative effects of social media on tribal life, thus creating a necessity of the research to deeply research on how social media utilization affects lifestyle change and socio-cultural interaction among tribal people.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The current literature denotes the increasing infiltration of digital technologies and social media in the rural and tribal areas of India



and the complex implications. Alam and Imran (2021) highlight the importance of digital literacy in determining the use of social media in rural India, with opportunities of information retrieval and obstacles of skill set, language, and meaningful interaction. According to studies on ICT and tribal development by Banerjee and Dey (2019), and Joshi and Singh (2020), it is found that digital initiatives can lead to improvement of education, awareness, and development results in tribal regions although their effects are not evenly spread due to infrastructural limitations and socio-economic inequality. Gupta and Raina (2016) also observe that as more rural users started using mobile internet, social media have been able to access more information thus hastening the exposure to new ideas, lifestyles and patterns of consumption. The importance of organised digital inclusion interventions and learning interventions in the inclusion of tribal communities in the digital world has also been highlighted by reports by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (2022) and Moinee Foundation (2022).

Some researchers have particularly focused on analyzing the socio-cultural consequences of using social media by the rural and tribal population. As Choudhury and Jha (2017) and Varghese and Raj (2018) note, the social media has a tremendous effect on the cultural identity and social aspects of the rural youth, which may lead to a conflict between the old and new digital values. Bedi and Chhachhi (2018) emphasize that in tribal communities, there are gendered digital divides, i.e. equal access and agency in the use of digital media are unequal, especially when it comes to women. According to Gogoi (2019) and Miah Abu Sayeed (2017), the exposure of tribal youth to social media can cause identity crises and changes in behavior, which influences culture practices and social interactions. Carlson and Frazer (2020) develop this debate by demonstrating how indigenous peoples around the world utilize social media as a platform of cultural articulation as well as negotiating their identity. Other studies by Sharma and Meena (2020) and Meena and Yadav (2022) also describe the issues of language loss and the transformation of the lifestyle patterns under the influence of the exposure to the digital media. As a whole, the literature indicates that, although social media has developmental and communicative positive impacts on the tribal communities, it is also associated with complex lifestyle and cultural change, therefore the detailed empirical studies are necessary to connect the usage of social media with the lifestyle change among tribal people.

## RESEARCH GAP

Although there is a growing literature on digital literacy, ICT adoption and social media application in rural or tribal settings, current research engages much on the concept of access, inclusion, education, or cultural identity without much consideration to the overall lifestyle impact of the social media use among tribal communities. The majority of existing literature focus either on developmental outcomes or on socio-cultural issues without the systematic correlation of the patterns of using social media with multidimensional lifestyle changes, including

everyday life, social intercourse, culture, and consumption patterns especially in flat tribal areas. Further, there is limited empirical research based on coherent use of statistical methods to compare the level of usage and evaluate their different effects on lifestyle change. This gap creates a necessity to undertake a comprehensive and data-based research to study the ways that the different degrees of social media use can be used to influence lifestyle change in tribal populations, thus becoming more informed and culturally aware of the digital and development policies.

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the scope and trends of social media use and to determine its influence on lifestyle alteration in tribal communities with references to the alteration of everyday habits, social life, culture, behavior of consumption.

## NULL HYPOTHESIS

- ❖ There is no significant impact of social media usage on lifestyle changes among tribal communities in terms of daily routines, social interactions, cultural practices, and consumption behavior.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current research design is a descriptive and analytical research design to understand the effects of the use of social media on the lifestyle changes among the tribal communities. The study was based on a primary data gathered in Araku (Aruku) tribal regions of Andhra Pradesh which are basically flat and semi-hilly tribal settlements with rising access to mobile connections. The study chosen the sample size of 200 tribal respondents; this was done to have sufficient representation and statistical reliability. The members of the tribal youth and adults who actively use mobile phones and social media platforms were the respondents. The purposive sampling technique was used because it helped to select respondents that were directly exposed to social media and could respond to the objectives of the study meaningfully. The data were gathered through the administration of structured questionnaire which was developed in a five-point Likert scale, and the questionnaire addressed social media usage, and lifestyle dimensions including daily activities and routine, social life, cultural practises and consumption behaviour.

To analyse the data, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values were utilized as descriptive statistics to get an idea of the overall trends of social media use and change in lifestyle among tribal communities. To verify the given hypothesis and study the correlation between variables, simple linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of the social media use on the overall change of lifestyle and the dimensions of the latter. Moreover, the One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to identify the differences in lifestyle changes in the various groups of social media users (low, medium and high users). The statistical software was employed in performing the analysis and the level of significance was set at 5 percent. These



statistical methods helped to properly evaluate the impact of social media on lifestyle change among tribal people in the Araku region.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Social Media Usage (SMU)	3.01	0.87	1.00	5.00
Daily Routines	3.04	0.78	1.00	5.00
Social Interactions	3.02	0.76	1.00	5.00
Cultural Practices	3.01	0.82	1.00	5.00
Consumption Behavior	3.05	0.79	1.00	5.00
Lifestyle (Overall)	3.03	0.62	1.42	4.69

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the social media use and lifestyle-related variables according to the data obtained in the flat tribal areas. The average of social media use (3.01) also means that the tribal respondents are moderately engaged in using social media sites, and it is showing an increasing exposure to digital life and traditional lifestyles. The standard deviation indicates that there is eminent variation in usage patterns which implies that there are changes in access, awareness and individual preferences among the community members. On the same note, average daily routine (3.04), social interaction (3.02), cultural practices (3.01) and consumption behavior (3.05) depict middle

degree of lifestyle change which depicts that social media has started interfering with daily routine, interpersonal interactions, cultural interactions and consumption habit without fully supplanting the traditional practices. The mean of the change of lifestyle of 3.03 accompanied by a comparatively smaller standard deviation indicates that the change in lifestyle is quite steady and gradual in the flat tribal regions examined. All these findings point to the fact that social media is currently taking a new yet neutral role in defining lifestyle patterns among tribal communities.

**Table 2: Regression Results**  
**Dependent Variable: Lifestyle (Overall)**

Predictor	$\beta$ (Coefficient)	t-value	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
Social Media Usage (SMU)	0.49	8.72	0.000	0.28

Table 2 shows the regression analysis outcomes of the effects of the use of social media on the general lifestyle change of the tribal communities. The regression coefficient ( $b = 0.49$ ) also shows that the relationship between the social media use and lifestyle changes is positive and significant to mean that the higher the use of social media, the higher the change in lifestyle among the respondents. This statistically significant relationship is proven by a t-value of 8.72 and a p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ), which allows the null hypothesis to be rejected. R<sup>2</sup> of 0.28 means that

only the use of social media serves to account the 28 percent of variation in the overall changes in lifestyle initiated among tribal communities, which is substantial in social science research. This finding means that social media is a significant influencing factor to influence the patterns of lifestyles like daily activities, socialization, culture, and consumption behaviour among tribal people in the research region, and it also indicates that there are other social and situational factors that influence lifestyle changes.

**Table 3: Dimension-wise Regression Results**

Dependent Variable	$\beta$ (SMU)	t-value	p-value	R <sup>2</sup>
Daily Routines	0.56	9.31	0.000	0.31
Social Interactions	0.52	8.94	0.000	0.29
Cultural Practices	0.36	6.11	0.000	0.16
Consumption Behavior	0.61	9.88	0.000	0.33

Table 3 shows the regression results of the dimensions that determine the effects of the use of social media on particular lifestyle dimensions among tribal communities. The findings reveal that the use of social media positively and significantly influences all the four lifestyle dimensions. The use of social media has a huge impact on daily routine ( $b = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which explains 31 percent of the variance, indicating that there are significant shifts in time spent, daily activities, and routines when using digital tools more. Likewise, the magnitude and substantial influence on social interactions ( $b = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is noticed, which explains the differences in communication

patterns and interpersonal relationships (29 percent of variations) and interacts with the variation. The influence on the cultural practices ( $b = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is rather moderate, however, is substantial and contributes to the 16-percent-variance, which can be characterized by the cumulative alterations in cultural participation and traditional practices. The most significant effect of using social media is found in consumption behavior ( $b = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which accounts for 33 percent of the variance, which could be attributed to higher exposure to digital content, advertising and aspirational lifestyles. In general, these results indicate that the use of social media plays a significant role in



causing multidimensional lifestyle change among tribal communities and with different extents of impacts depending on the aspects of lifestyle.

**Table 4: ANOVA – Lifestyle (Overall) by SMU Groups**

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	19.84	2	9.92	21.67	0.000
Within Groups	90.19	197	0.46		
Total	110.03	199			

Table 4 shows the findings of the one-way ANOVA that was used to test the hypothesis that there are differences in overall lifestyle changes across social media use (low, medium, and high) tribal communities. The results of the ANOVA indicate that the differences in the overall lifestyle scores in the groups are statistically significant because the F-value is 21.67 and the p-value is 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). This means that the degree of the use of social media has profound impact on the lifestyle change among

the respondents. The greater between-group sum of squares than within-group variation shows that the variation in lifestyle changes has a significant association with the difference in the levels of social media use. Thus, the null hypothesis of no difference in lifestyle changes between social media usage groups is rejected which proves that tribal people with different degrees of social media use have substantially different levels of lifestyle change.

**Table 5: Group-wise Means (Lifestyle Overall)**

SMU Group	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Low	61	2.62	0.54
Medium	78	3.02	0.49
High	61	3.46	0.52

Table 5 presents how the tribal communities have their group-wise mean differences of their overall lifestyle changes at varying levels of social media use. The findings show that the change in lifestyle is evident and growing progressively with the growth in the use of social media. The respondents who have low social media use have the lowest mean lifestyle score (Mean = 2.62), implying that they have not made a lot of lifestyle changes whereas middle users have an average lifestyle transformation (Mean = 3.02). Conversely, those who have high usage of social media record the highest mean lifestyle score (Mean = 3.46) which depict stronger shifts in day-to-day activities, socialization, culture and consumption patterns. Standard deviations between groups are quite low which denotes uniformity in each category of use.

These findings are also further supported by the results of hypothesis testing. The regression analysis shows that the p-values are less than 0.05 and the ANOVA also indicates that the p-value is below 0.05, this is why the null hypothesis is rejected. This proves that the use of social media is statistically significant in changing the lifestyle of tribal communities. All in all, the results prove that the increased use of social media is correlated with the increased lifestyle change, which is why social media is discussed as a major contributing factor to social and cultural changes within the tribal regions.

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The descriptive analysis reveals that the tribal respondents present a moderate degree of social media use that can be linked to the gradual and consistent change in lifestyle across daily activities, socialization, culture, and consumption behavior in flat tribal settings.

2. The regression outcomes also verify that the use of social media positively and significantly influences the general change in lifestyles, which accounts for the significant percentage of system variation in changing lifestyle within tribal groups.
3. The dimension-wise analysis shows that the use of social media has a considerable impact on the entire aspect of lifestyle, consumption behavior is the most impacted with an implication passing to the daily routine and socialization with a significantly large but moderate impact on cultural practices.
4. ANOVA and group-wise comparative demonstrate that the more the respondents use social media, the more they change their lifestyle with the tribal respondents who use the social media a lot recording high scores regarding the new lifestyle change in comparison to low and medium users thereby rejecting the null hypothesis.

### CONCLUSION

The current paper investigated how the use of social media has influenced lifestyle change in tribal societies in flat tribal regions, by specifically focusing on their everyday activities, interpersonal relationships, culture, and consumption patterns. The results indicate that the use of social media among the tribal populations has a moderate level but continues to grow with better connectivity to the mobile phone and access to digital devices. This heightened exposure to the social media has resulted to noticeable albeit gradual alterations in lifestyle that imply that the change process is at a transitional phase where ancient modes of doing stuff collide with the fresh digital powers. These objective results avail the evidence that application of social media has statistically significant, positive impact on overall lifestyle change within the tribal communities. This is because the level of



social media application has risen with increased adjustments in daily living, communication style, consumption, and engagement in culture. Though the influence on cultural practices is certainly quite moderate, significant, it means that cultural adaptation, however, is gradual and, nevertheless, persistent. Overall, the paper reaches the conclusion that the modern day tribal lives are now largely influenced by the phenomenon of social media, and culturally sufficient digital literacy activities and policy initiatives are crucial in the circumstances related to the need to meet the requirements of the inclusive development of the tribes without causing the disruption of the cultural peculiarities of the indigenous populations..

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