



## INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE YOUNG GENERATION OF RABHA TRIBE OF WEST BENGAL: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*Digital technologies, like, the internet, smartphones, and social media are valuable communication tools to share, create, and spread information, knowledge, education, communication, and social interaction online. Its rapid proliferation increased the digital population enormously in India. Their use might have obvious influence on the digital people of the country. The purpose was to accentuate the influence of social media upon the young generation users. The objective was to find out the extent of the influence of social media upon the young generation of indigenous Rabha tribal users and changes in their daily lives. The focus of the study was young Rabhas aged between 18 to 30 years as this age group is deemed the most susceptible to the influence of social media usages. Primary and secondary data sources were consulted. The case study method was applied for this qualitative study. Interview technique applied for conducting case studies, besides observation. The young generation Rabhas are adopting and experiencing the active use of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms. It has brought about changes and progress in daily lives of young generation Rabha users. Social media is also helping them to perpetuate the traditional Rabha cultural identity.*

*Simultaneously, it indicates that there is a relationship of digital technologies like internet, smartphones, and social media with the present-day younger generation of Rabha tribe in terms of its influence upon them, specifically in the context sociology of science and digital technologies, and the younger generation.*

**Keywords:** *Digital technologies, internet, communication, social media, education, health, culture, entertainment.*

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is an internet-based form of electronic communication and information digital technology that facilitate social network platforms and applications on line. The internet, smartphones, social media, and social networking usage are intertwined with each other in the everyday life and activities of its users in today's post-modern society. Smartphone play a contributing key role as a device-cum-source for using, scrolling, browsing, and exploring various social media sites, namely, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. These social media sites as a source of application contribute to the flow of information, upgrading the knowledge and education, news, ideas, and other trends in the daily lives of the users. The user-generated content on social media defines communication, information, and interactive technologies thereby play concomitant contributing role to bring about significant influence in today's post-modern society whether it is social, cultural, economic, political, health care, etc.



The social media has become an integral part of the internet and digital technologies in India, and its digital landscape is expanding rapidly since 2015. The growth of social media in the 21st century of post-modern India by leaps and bounds over the past few years specifically from 2015 onwards has now been playing an increasingly large and crucial role in the lives of its people. With more than half of India's population online and the number of internet and smartphones user on the rise, social media has become one of the most needed and popular ways of living for the people in the country. Social media for the people in the country served as a melange of ideas, information, knowledge, and trends of all kinds in the spheres of social, educational, economic, political, and cultural, apart from entertainment, and social connectedness. Now the argument is that the influence of the usage of social media upon its users have been the consequence of using of internet and social media sites on Smartphone mainly as the sources. Therefore, to what extent and nature of social media's influence depend solely upon the users, like the extent of its use, choice, interest, need, intention, and specific requirements to make use of social media. Naturally, the extent and type of use of social media by its users play a significant role in bringing about the nature of its influence upon them.

This study attempted to elucidate the influence of social media upon its users based on the 'media ecology' theory and analysed the influence of the social media platforms used and its social environment amongst the younger generation Rabha users, specifically in the context sociology of science and digital technologies and the younger generation.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Postman (1979, p. 186): Media ecology is the study of human environments. They are concerned about understanding how communication technologies and techniques control the form, amount, speed, distribution, and direction of information: and how, at the same time, these configurations or preferences of information impact people's perceptions, values, and attitudes.

Velasquez (2018: 586) opined that according to Postman ideas, ecology of media as environment is synthesized in a basic idea: technologies - which entail communication technologies, from writing to digital media - they generate environments that affect the everyday life of actors using them. For Neil Postman, the word ecology meant the study of environments, that is, the observation about their structure, content, and impact on people.

Gamel et al. (2021) observed that social media platforms rely on digital technologies and computer-mediated communication to get information. The media ecology theory proposed by McLuhan is still relevant as the theory highlights the relationship between subjectivity and social media as the social patterns and interaction formed are linked to the digital culture. This according to Roslan, et.al (2022) shows how the interface between media, technology and communication influence the human environment. Tiani et al. (2021) stated that media ecology is a platform that produces an influence on its environment. In the context of social media, a media ecology is observed when social media platforms influence the behaviour of users, as different types of social media platform have different users with different characteristics.

The development of internet technologies had lowered the barrier to contributing information online. Almost anyone with internet access could easily blog, tweet review, comment, and updates their Facebook status. These communication tools have led to an explosion of social media content (Pan and Crotts, 2012).

Keeping in mind the influence of use of smartphones and social media usage on its users, the citation made by GSMA (2022:.4) is important which reveals that 'By the end of 2021, 5.3 billion people subscribed to mobile services, representing 67% of the global population. In a growing number of markets, most adults now own a mobile phone, meaning that future growth will come from younger populations taking out a mobile subscription for the first time. Over the period to 2025, there will be



an additional 400 million new mobile subscribers, most of them from the Asia Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa, taking the total number of subscribers to 5.7 billion (70% of the global population)'. It implies the potentiality of the younger generation of social media users on smartphones and its influence in the coming years.

Rice et al. (2016:14) in their review, concluded that despite some challenges with telecommunications access and the social disadvantages experienced by many tribal youths, social media presents opportunities given it can have great significance in the lives of indigenous young people. Whenever the tribal community people have accessed the internet resources and have the device like smartphones to use, it is a fact that they actively use the internet, and social media sites, not only for dispersing their cultural tradition and identity but also to gain information, knowledge, communication, social interaction, and entertainment on social media platforms. Therefore, it may be justified to consider that smartphones and social media have an obvious influence on its users of tribal communities. Because, 'Media should be gauged by how they are used and with what effect in terms of social change' (Schroeder, 2018, 5).

Keeping all above in mind, it is inquisitive for the purpose to ascertain the influence vis-à-vis effect of social media usage upon its young generation users of forest Rabha tribal community in West Bengal, India.

## **OBJECTIVE**

To find out the extent of influence of social media usage upon its young generation users of indigenous forest Rabha tribe that brought about the changes in their daily lives. The following research questions were derived from the objective:

1. What about the influence on communication, and social networking skills?
2. What about the influence on education?
3. What about the influence on health and well-being?
4. What about the influence on culture?
5. What about the influence on entertainment?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The primary data was collected by conducting a field survey during the period of September-October 2021 in Andu and Mendabari Rabha forest villages located in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal, India. Secondary data were obtained from published materials both in print and on websites.

The qualitative research like case study method was adopted. The interview technique was applied for conducting case studies and data collection. The 'snowball-cum-referral sampling' (Goodman, 1961) technique was applied in selecting the informants of case studies.

Criteria for selecting the informants for case studies were:

- i). The informants are to be the young Rabha ones in the age group between 18 to 30 years.
- ii) The informants should have the smartphone for personal use.
- iii) The informants are the users of the social media sites.
- iv) The education of the informants is to be minimum Secondary School examination passed and above.

## **INTERNET, SMARTPHONE, AND SOCIAL MEDIA PROLIFERATION IN INDIA**

The rapid growth and spread of digital technologies like, the internet, computer, laptops, smartphones, tablets, and online social media in post-modern India have created a situation in which it is right to be said that "we are moving from the information society to the networked society" (Ericsson, 2011:21). Digital technologies in this post-modern phase play a key role to facilitate users' quick and easy electronic communication and mobility of a wide range of content in different spheres

of a society. Smartphones have facilitated easy access to various social media sites, and it has become the essential electronic device in the daily life of people irrespective, of gender, caste, class, language, community, and ethnicity worldwide. Smartphones have the greatest advantage because it remains always with an individual wherever he goes.

The easy availability of superfast internet at low prices and the decline in Smartphone prices are the major reasons behind the massive increase in the usage of the internet, and smartphones across India. In 2022, the most dominant device in India is the Mobile Phone, with a share of 75.91 percent, Laptop & Desktop with 23.67 percent, followed by tablets with 0.42 percent (India Social Media Statistics, 2022).

The growth of mobile phone internet users in India had been though gradually started since 2010, but such growth has taken a turn to massive growth after 2015. For instance, in 2010 the number of mobile phone internet users was 62 million, which increased to 162 million in 2015. But after 2015, it increased rapidly to 744.06 million in 2020. Apart from these, it is estimated to be increased to 930.57 million as of the current year 2022 (Basuray, 2022 a). Similarly, the gradual growth in the number of Smartphone users in India had been from 2010 (34 million), but after 2015 (250.66 million) it increased enormously to 748.32 million in 2020. Aside from these, it is estimated to be increased to 931.30 million as of the current year 2022 (Sun, 2022).

In post-modern India, the digital population across India has increased rapidly, and social media has become an integral part of the internet, and mobile with internet like smartphones. Therefore, at present the internet and mobile internet have no doubt contributed immensely to the rise and growth of social media users by leaps and bounds all over the country over the few years since 2015. As of February 2022, there are 658 million active internet users and 467 active social media users in India (Basuray, 2022 b). In India, the average daily time spent using the internet is 7 hours, using the internet on mobile devices 4 hours 5 minutes, and using social media 2 hours 36 minutes (India Social Media Statistics, 2022). In India, since 2015, there is immense progress on the connectivity side. Social network user penetration in India was 19.13 percent in 2015 which increased to 50.44 percent in 2020 and is estimated to be 58.31 percent in the current year 2022 (Basuray, 2022 c).

The most popular social media platforms in India are WhatsApp (534.30 million active users), followed Instagram (503.37 million users), and Facebook 491.53 million users (India Social Media Statistics, 2022). As of April 2022, there are 467 million unique YouTube users in India (Ceci, 2022).

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

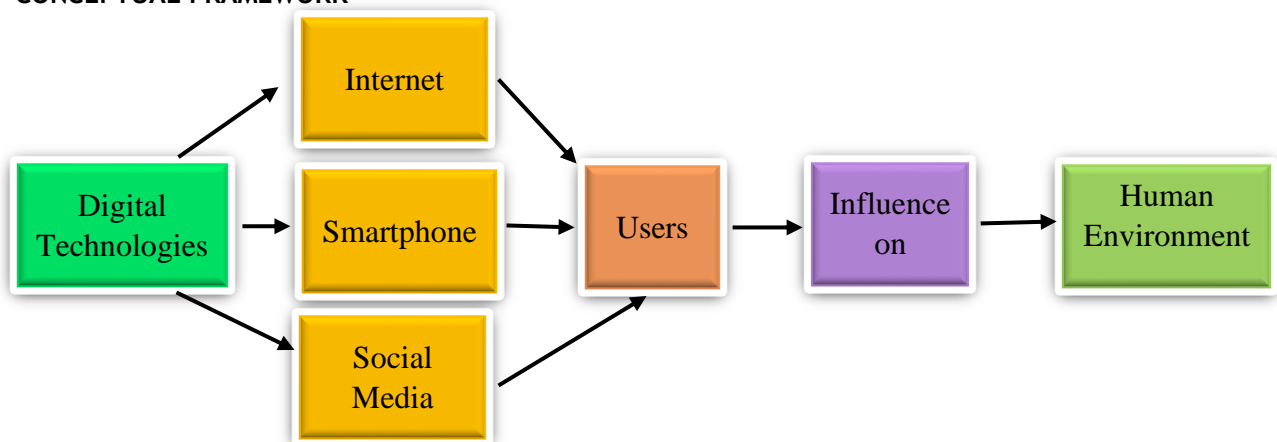
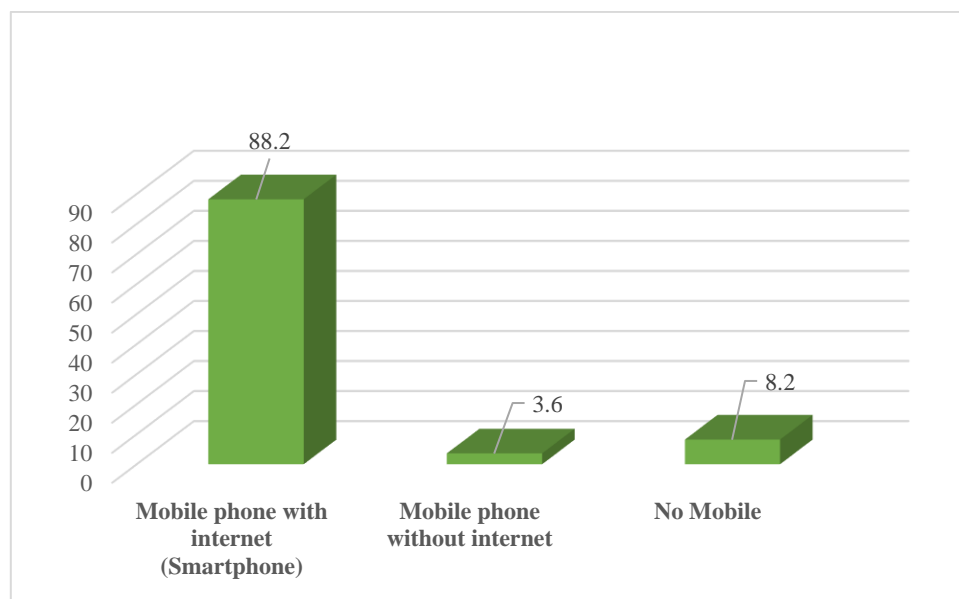


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Based on the Postman's (1979, p. 186) postulation of 'Media ecology' is the study of human environments, it is conceptualised that the media digital technologies like internet, smartphone, and social media influence simultaneously on its users' environment, specifically, in the arena of digital communication, and social networking skills, education, health and well-being, culture, and entertainment (Figure 1).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Rabha is one of the indigenous tribal communities found in West Bengal, India. Ethnically, the Rabha belongs to the Indo-Tibetan group. In the past, Rabhas were a little-known community. In the past, their living was conservative and restricted to their own abode in forest villages (Raha, 1974).



**Figure 2: Mobile phone ownership by Rabha families in forest village**

### Findings

The total families of study forest villages are 220, of which 88.2 percent own mobile phone with internet (Figure 2). All the informant of the case studies are the users of the digital technologies like, internet, social media, and smartphones. They actively up take social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Of the total 30 interviews, the findings of following 10 key case studies are presented in view of the comprehension of factual unique case of the relationship in between social media and the younger generation of Rabha tribe in terms of its effect upon them, specifically in the context sociology of digital technologies and the younger generation.

The followings are the findings of the *key case studies* of younger generation Rabha internet, smartphones, and social media users.

1. Age- 30; Gender- Female; Education- Class IX; Occupation- Service in Private Sector.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

According to her, the Facebook of social media site helps her to connect with people in her community, and other community people as well. She is engaged as a sales representative/agent of an Ayurvedic Medicine Company. Social media help her not only to connect with existing clients but also to get more new clients connected from neighbouring and other villages. Her job is to connect more clients with whom she communicates the details and utility of the Company's Ayurvedic products and sells them. Therefore, Facebook has played a vital role in her case. She promotes Ayurvedic products on Facebook and WhatsApp sites.



She got this job through social media sites. One of her Facebook friends in another village informed her about the recruitment and other information regarding her present job. Though she got special training for her present job, even then she connects on Facebook to those people who are engaged in this profession and get all kinds of help and information. She gets all updates regarding her company and profession on Facebook.

She is a divorcee and lives separately, while her two daughters are living with their father far away from her residential location. Because of an unhealthy relationship with her ex-husband and in-laws, she cannot visit her children quite often. In her case, she gets all updates about her children's life on Facebook posts.

She watches and scrolls different entertainment videos or news related to Bengali serials, movies, songs, and artists. She also listens to different trending songs created in the Rabha language version. According to her, she is benefitted from using social media sites that helped to get her financially independent, to connect and communicate in a better way not only with the clients but also with other people and gained many friends. It also has helped to get relief and mental peace as well as deal with her loneliness more conveniently and easily. Moreover, it has helped her to get updates about her children besides connecting and interacting with them on social media sites.

2. Age-27; Gender-Female; Education- Master of Arts (M.A), and B.Ed.; Occupation- Private Tutor.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

On asked how the media benefited her she said she met her fiancé first on Facebook who is residing in another village. Before that, she was not aware of the habitation of Rabhas also in her fiancé's village.

She is getting knowledge and updates about ongoing fashion trends in India. She is enriched with ideas about how to do bridal makeup on tutorial videos on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, and decided to apply such gained knowledge of bridal makeup techniques and processes on her already scheduled wedding day.

She is connected online with her relatives, friends, and even university friends on social media sites. She watches different music, other entertainment videos, and funny videos on Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook as well. Apart from various news and other informative pages, she also gets most of the national news and other information on social media platforms. So, she does not feel aloof and isolated from recent trends, news, and other related information.

3. Age- 27; Gender-Male; Education- Bachelor of Arts (B.A.); Occupation- Wooden Furniture and related Business.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

Social media keeps him entertained. It helps to get relief from stress, and boredom as well as gives mental peace.

When his wife was pregnant, she used to watch videos on YouTube related to what to eat or not to eat during the period of pregnancy, besides exercises suitable for a pregnant woman. He also watched all kinds of pregnancy-related tips, information, exercise, and related videos on YouTube for guiding his wife.

His wife was a graduate student during the pandemic, and she used to study by scrolling and watching B.A. course study-related videos on YouTube. His daughter also sometimes watches cartoons on YouTube.

His friends often share with him various popular songs and music videos translated into the Rabha language on social media sites. He is amazed that how young Rabha girls and boys translate the trending songs into the Rabha language.

4. Age- 28; Gender- Female; Education- Class X; Occupation-Housewife.





User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

For her, social media is an important source of entertainment. She normally scrolls different videos on YouTube whenever she is off-mood, and during leisure hours. Besides, she watches slots of cooking videos on YouTube and Facebook. Moreover, she loves to watch different Bengali and Rabha song videos on YouTube. Her children also love to see free cartoons available on YouTube.

She has many friends on Facebook, and often chats with them. According to her, social media helped her to broaden her communication and interaction with others, outside the forest village.

Her husband is working in another place where he resides also. WhatsApp platform helped her significantly to make chat often with her husband by video-calling as well as sharing images of each other. It is also helping her to get relief from anxiety about her husband's health and other related family affairs.

5. Age-18; Gender-Male; Education- Student of Class XII; Occupation- Student.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

During the Pandemic and lockdown, the school was closed due to the maintenance of social distancing and avoiding any gathering in one place, the school authority created their official WhatsApp group of students to circulate study notes. Moreover, even the private tuition teachers also circulated study notes to their students on the WhatsApp site at that time. She was also a member of such a WhatsApp group and used to get study notes from her teachers in different subjects for preparation for the final Higher Secondary Examination. Even her private tutor also circulated study notes on specific subjects. So, WhatsApp platforms played a significant and useful role in disseminating educational content and knowledge to students during the pandemic. Besides, he also used to scroll through YouTube videos for study references.

Social media sites are the key sources for him to get relief from boredom. During the lockdown, it was a very tough time to meeting his friends. As a result, he started facing mental agony, and emotional stress during lockdown and maintenance of social distancing. Social media during the period of the pandemic helped him to stay connected online with his friends and other known people. On Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube he came to know many facts, and information not only at the national but also at the international level.

He likes to scroll and watches various scientific-oriented videos on YouTube besides the latest trending songs and funny videos. He likes Facebook because he can make friends and be friendly with other people in different places. He also gets information about trending fashion and other things on social media sites.

6. Age- 24; Gender-Female; Education- Bachelor of Arts. Occupation- Student of Master of Arts (M.A.) in Political Science.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

She is a big fan of K-pop. She loves to watch Korean, Chinese, and Thai dramas. She usually comes to know all these on YouTube recommendations.

According to her, social media has brought a significant change in her life. She is now able to know about other countries on social media. Moreover, on social media, she can keep herself updated about new trends in fashion, besides information and news at national, and at international levels.

Social media has helped to develop her English communication skill and vocabulary. She used to get study-related references and materials during her final years of graduation by scrolling and watching YouTube, besides education and knowledge-oriented Facebook pages related to her study.

A few years back, her mother died due to suffering from cancer. During her mother's suffering from cancer disease, she used to watch different doctors' lectures and follow their advice on YouTube about what to eat and not to eat by a cancer patient.



After her mother's death, she got herself into depression, and at that time she could have made a few friends on Facebook who used to motivate and encourage her. These Facebook friends are still in touch with her on Facebook. So, according to her, social media has contributed to her mental well-being. Even now, she watches some health and medical-related videos for her father.

Social media overall has changed her fashion sense also. She loves to do Indo-western fusion fashion. She now feels more confident regarding her fashion and dress sense and choices, which is the contribution of social media in her case.

Even her father earlier was not aware of social media, and how to use it, but now he has become an active user of Facebook and WhatsApp. He also likes to watch some free action movies available on YouTube.

7. Age- 21; Gender- Female; Education- Higher Secondary; Occupation- Student of Fashion Designing Course.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

She was interested in fashion from the beginning but being a simple forest village girl never thought of pursuing it as her career, though used to watch all kinds of fashion-related videos on social media like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. But when the opportunity came during her final year of school, she grabbed that opportunity of studying a fashion design course. Social media has played a prime role to keep her updated on trending fashion-related news, and fashion trends worldwide for the study course. She follows different pages on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube for careers and inspiration.

WhatsApp is very convenient for staying in touch online with friends and family in her opinion. During the lockdown she not only got her all-study notes but also was able to contact her professors on WhatsApp only. Instagram and different YouTube videos also help to improve her knowledge of the English language.

She loves to watch Korean dramas and K-POP music videos on social media. She gets all its recommendations from YouTube, Instagram, and peer group friends. Social media not only helps in career building but also keeps her entertained.

In the case of health, her mother sometimes watches health programmes and live Bengali news on YouTube. She is teaching her mother how to use Facebook and WhatsApp, and search for something on YouTube.

On asked what she thinks about the influence of social media in her community and village. According to her, social media has influenced much on communication, like, especially the young Rabhas are now enlightened with knowledge about the outside world beyond their forest village. They have now a keen interest in knowing facts, information, trend, and news beyond their village at regional, national, and international levels. All this has affected positively, for instance, their lifestyle, the process of broad rational thinking, and dreams to think bigger in their future career and living like her.

8. Age-20; Gender-Male; Education- Higher Secondary; Occupation- Forest Tourist Guide.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

He is a private local forest tourist guide and engaged with local forest resorts in or nearby Chilapata Reserved Forest areas. According to him, social media have benefited him to gain monetary income. Almost all the resorts have their promotion pages on Facebook besides other official sites. So, many tourists who wish to spend a peaceful vacation in those resorts which are adjacent to the forest, usually get all the information on Facebook pages about such resorts. He is professionally linked with some of these resorts. So, whenever tourists come to stay in these resorts, the official of these resorts then contact him. Sometimes tourists, especially those of his age, form a close bond with him, who then starts following him on Facebook, and Instagram mainly to stay in touch continuously with him.





According to him, WhatsApp is a more convenient and useful social app in his profession as the majority of the contacts and networks are usually made on WhatsApp.

9. Age-22; Gender- Female; Education- Class Secondary; Occupation- Housewife.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

In her free time does Facebook. She came to know about many other Rabhas on Facebook from different places. Besides Rabha people, she also talks with other community people. She feels amazed at how the internet and social media have influenced people, especially their community people. She feels that before her knowledge about the outside world was very limited but after using the internet and social media, she realized that the outside world is really big and there are so many interesting things to know. She is quite introverted, so she doesn't feel comfortable talking with people which brought her some sort of loneliness. But through social media, she has made many friends and interestingly she does not feel uncomfortable talking and chatting with them.

10. Age-20; Gender- Male; Education- Secondary; Occupation- Farmer.

User- Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp on Smartphone.

He, in his free time, likes to scroll and watch Facebook. Besides, during work time sometimes he listens to songs and watches music videos on YouTube. He uses WhatsApp sites for communicating, interacting, and sharing images with his friends and other known persons. His friends also send him various popular songs and music videos translated into the Rabha language.

### *Discussion*

Based on the findings of the key case studies on the extent of effects of social media on young generation of Rabha users in forest villages the discussion is presented in the following five sub-sections.

#### 1. Influence on communication, and social networking skills

The usage of social media prioritizes the advancement of social interaction between a wide range of people and better digital communication that profoundly changes the way people communicate due to its often use in daily lives. It brings new efficiency to digital communication and social networking skills.

The use of social media among Rabhas has created connectivity between their people living in other places to a great extent. They are connecting digitally through the usage of smartphones, and social media like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. They are more facilitated to connecting with other Rabha people and making connections and companions with different people having various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The young Rabhas are now moving towards better digital communication skills, exchanging views, and knowledge with each other on social media platforms. The usage of smartphones and interaction on social media sites helps to get them enriched with new knowledge about their people, and other people. Above all, usage of social media sites has also broadened their scope of social network and interaction, which was not so earlier even among their parent's generation.

#### 2. Influence on education

The use of social media has a very pronounced impact on education, whenever it is used for educational purposes. Internet, smartphones, and social media are now very prominent sources for collecting educational information, text, and data. It has played a vital role in empowering Rabha students and teachers due to the use of a new and easy way of sharing and gathering information, thus making their society forward, and progress in education.



Educational spread among Rabhas was minimal (Raychaudhuri, 2007) in the past because of their conservative society, unavailability of schools and educational infrastructures within or nearby villages, and lack of communication and transportation. Nowadays, Rabhas can complete their schooling because of the availability of schools within or nearby villages and towns, better road, transportation, and communication. For example, their literacy rate<sup>3</sup> was 30.4 percent in 1991 but increased rapidly to 73.6 percent in 2011 (Census of India, 1991, 2011).

Today, the young generation Rabhas are using different social media platforms like WhatsApp, and Facebook for distributing and gathering study materials. YouTube is found top among all social media in their list for gathering information. They are now diversifying their choices of education. Usage of social media is of great help for them to collect information about different scopes of academic careers they aspire to. Consequently, some of them also left their respective Rabha forest villages to pursue higher studies.

The strong impact of using social media on their academic life was during the Covid-19 pandemic situation when the whole educational system of the country rested on digitalization. The Rabha students at that time were attending their school and college classes online mode. Moreover, they appeared in examinations like others online from their respective homes/villages. Furthermore, they studied different national-level competitive examinations on YouTube and Facebook for a job career. Resultantly, the younger generation of Rabhas is found to have a relatively good educational attainment, and better educational aspirations as compared to the situation of their parent's and forefathers' generations. They are now competitive in education careers with others in general.

Apart from formal education, they are also learning different lessons like cooking lessons, sewing lessons, and so forth from the usage of social media sites like Facebook, and YouTube. These technological and advanced social media sites were not available and accessible even in their parent's generation. Therefore, the young Rabhas are impressively taking full advantage of the usage of smartphones and social media sites for their academic and job careers.

### 3. Influence on health and well-being

Usages of the internet, smartphones and social media platforms have become concomitant sources of acquiring information on health and well-being. The young generation of Rabhas is now experiencing and achieving beneficial effects like keep continue better health and well-being by using smartphones and various social media sites in their daily lives. During pregnancy, they usually watch YouTube videos for pregnancy-related tips and information, particularly regarding what to eat and not to eat, various precautions to observe, and different exercises suitable for pregnant ones. They follow other Yoga channels on YouTube to learn Yoga for keeping continue their good health. They get information on diseases, medicines, side effects, etc., from the internet and social media. They even take online consultations with doctors and rural health assistants whenever very necessary. Using social media has become the way for them to overcome and relieve from their daily stresses and refresh their minds. They can now connect with their friends, neighbours, families, and relatives on smartphones and social media platforms which are of great help to keep continue better social and mental health and well-being.

### 4. Influence on culture

It can be argued that social media in post-modern society has a very close relationship with culture. Therefore, the usage of borderless social media has an obvious effect on the culture of a community. The usage of social media has connected the people and culture within the country and all over the world, and thus facilitates the cultural diffusion between people having different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In the case of Rabhas, the use of social media sites by the young generation has helped not only to cross the boundary of their culture, but also created a situation of cultural diffusion among them. The Rabha tribal community people, particularly its young generation, are also



influenced by social media's cultural content-oriented usages which have grown their interest and curiosity about other cultural trends at regional, national, and global levels. As a result, there are changes among them specifically in their taste and interest in other cultural components like music, dance, food habits, lifestyles, fashion, style and dressing patterns, etc. at regional, national, and international levels.

In the past, the Rabhas used their traditional music to ingratiate deities after every ritual and feast. Gradually, to date, their purpose of performing their traditional dance and music has changed according to time. At present, besides learning and sharing their traditional songs and dances, both young males and females are impressively getting them attracted to Bollywood music and dance. On social media, they learn different Indian dance forms, such as Bollywood dance forms and semi-classical forms. They liked to learn and sing Bollywood songs and other regional language songs in trend. How can they able to know about the trends and learn new songs? They come to know this mainly on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Even they have now been making music cover videos of different Bollywood songs in their Rabha language which they post and share on YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. They also share reels (small videos) of Bollywood cover dances on Instagram and Facebook.

Apart from Bollywood songs and music, they are also fascinated by K-pop (Korean pop) and Western-pop culture. They follow different K-pop groups and idols: BTS, Blackpink, Exo, SHINee, Big bang, Twice, ITZY, IU, G-idle, Aespa, Got7, etc. They are so involved with K-pop that they started adopting Korean culture in their daily lives by using a few Korean words, and using them in their local terminological usages. They use Google translate and YouTube videos to understand and learn Korean words. They watch their favourite K-pop idols' videos on YouTube to know more about them.

Moreover, Sri Lankan Yohani's 'song titled 'Manike Mage Hithe', released in 2020, is also covered in Rabha language and uploaded on YouTube on 6th September 2021, having 37,475 views so far. Moreover, from March 2018 to December 2021, 49 Rabha video songs, including one Rabha folk theatre, have been uploaded on YouTube (Source: [https:// www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com), retrieved on 3rd March 2022). They are crazy about this song and share it in the community including people other than Rabhas. They grow their connections in such ways on social media. Therefore, the use of social media is also helping them to keep continue their Rabha dialect as well as their traditional songs, dance forms, and folk theatre. These in turn also have contributed to the perpetuation of their traditional Rabha cultural identity and language to an extent.

Besides music and dance, using social media has also influenced their dress pattern and fashion. Rabhas have their traditional dress, which they weaved themselves in the past, and weaving was a part of women's daily household work. Over the years, and the use of social media has facilitated young generation to have now different dress options, which was not so in the situation of their elder generations. The use of social media usage has influenced upon the fashion and clothing trends among young Rabha men and women. They follow other fashion influencers and bloggers on YouTube and Instagram. The young male has been styling their hair like celebrities after watching their image, and videos on social media. They are following fashion at par with the trends on social media and updating their fashion accordingly. They have started even doing online shopping according to their requirement from different sites like Amazon and Flipkart. Their usage on social media has influenced choice and taste in fashion. It helped them make their new fashion ideas, like wearing Indo-western fusion attire. The way of watching and following the fashion culture content on social media, in turn, has made some of them inspired and persuaded and admitted to fashion design courses. According to them, using social media, on the whole, is helping them to update modern trends in every sphere related to their daily lives.



## 5. Influence on entertainment

Social media and entertainment are close associates with each other. In the past, the only ways of entertainment for Rabha community people were traditional dance and singing which used to be performed at the time of their 'Puja' (worship), celebrations, and feasting together. However, over time, their idea of entertainment changed to an extent; especially after the young generation of Rabhas started to make use of the internet, smartphones, and social media technology. Now, Rabhas watch Bollywood and regional language movies for entertainment. In their leisure time, young Rabhas prefer internet surfing, exploring new things, cultures, people, and knowledge, and connecting with friends on WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram - which now are their favourites.

Both the young Rabha men and women like to watch South-Asian dramas, namely, Korean dramas, Chinese dramas, Thai dramas, and Taiwanese dramas on social media sites. Together with the younger generation, their parents also watch Hindi dubbed Korean dramas, movies which are usually telecast sometimes on Indian channels. Their growing interest in south-Asian dramas came through recommendations on social media like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Social media has become their way of relaxation and a budding interest in knowing new things, knowledge-cum-education, people, culture, and institutions. All of these keep them entertained, and that also create instills in them an urge to gain knowledge.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The rapid growth and spread of digital technologies such as the internet, computer, laptops, smartphones, tablets, and online social media users in India have contributed to enormous growth of the digital population and social media users over a few years specifically from the year 2015 to 2022.

The use of social media by indigenous forest Rabha young generation has an impressive beneficial influence on them. They are making active use of social media and are getting benefits from the usage of social media platforms namely, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Their proper and positive use of social media has influenced them to improve their knowledge of education in digital communication and skills. Apart from connecting people, these keep them updated about new trends, knowledge, and different unknown things.

They benefitted from using education and career-related content on social media, and that also helped them to walk on the path of progress in the spheres of education and career, and aspirations. The use of social media helps them to accomplish their curiosity about various cultures, people, and places.

The usage of social media helps them to be acculturated with modern trends of entertainment. It has changed their music taste, dance style, modern fashion, lifestyles, and food habits. Moreover, their growing use of social media and interactions helps them to cope with daily stress and refresh their minds, and thus help them continue better mental health, as well as improve their knowledge on health and well-being.


Moreover, social media sites are also used by the young generation Rabha users to keep continue their Rabha language as well as their traditional songs, dance forms, and folk theatre. These, in turn, have contributed to the perpetuation of their traditional Rabha cultural identity to some extent.

Above all, it concludes that there a relationship of digital technologies like internet, smartphones, and social media with the present-day younger generation of Rabha tribe in terms of its influence upon them, specifically in the context of sociology of science and digital technologies, and the younger generation.

The study recommends further research on the aspect of changes in the behavioural pattern of the younger generation digital technologies like internet, smartphones, and social media users of Rabha tribe.

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**Ethical Issues.** Addressing to the ethical issues by the researchers is vital for carrying out a research study. Therefore, the ethical standards in this study were maintained in each step, and ensured that the informants took part voluntarily for the interview. The respondents were informed and made aware that the information to be obtained from them was only for the study, and research. Hence, it would not be disclosed to anybody, and from them was only for the study, and research. Thus, it would not be disclosed to anybody, and their privacy and secrecy should strictly be maintained, and the researcher only would have the access to them.

Participants were informed clearly that the information they would provide in the survey and during the interview would be kept strictly confidential. Only the researchers would have access to them. Such specifics would be destroyed upon completion of data analysis and crosstabulation. Privacy during the interview process was safeguarded, and before interviewing, the oral consents of informants was registered. Moreover, while obtaining the consent or conducting interview during the study any form of coercion of the study subjects was strictly avoided, and it was entirely relied on the discretion of informants to participate in the interview.

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#### **Paper authorship**

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