Exploring the Motivations for Social Media Use among Tribal Women in North Gujarat: A Sociological Analysis

Dharmendrakumar DA[1*], Kumar A[2]

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.16417367

[1*] Dhanula Anjli Dharmendrakumar, Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Madhav University, Pindwara (Sirohi), Rajasthan, India.

[2] Amarjeet Kumar, Research Guide, Department of Sociology, Madhav University, Pindwara (Sirohi), Rajasthan, India.

In recent years, the reach of digital technology has extended into India's most remote and socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Among the key demographic groups entering the digital fold are tribal women, whose engagement with platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube represents a significant shift in patterns of communication, knowledge access, and identity formation (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2014). However, despite the growing relevance of this trend, scholarly attention to the motivations behind their social media usage remains limited.

Social media, as framed by Castells (2011), is a powerful agent of social change, enabling new forms of networked individualism and collective identity. For tribal women in North Gujarat—historically excluded from mainstream educational and economic systems—the mobile phone and internet offer not only connection but also a sense of visibility and voice (Sundar, 2020). Their motivations for engaging with social media are deeply embedded in their socio-cultural realities, encompassing a desire for inclusion, expression, learning, and economic participation.

From a sociological perspective, the use of social media among tribal women is not merely a digital phenomenon but also a reflection of broader structural shifts in gender roles, rural development, and technological penetration (Jain & Kurane, 2018). Whether as learners, entrepreneurs, homemakers, or activists, tribal women are finding in social media a space for identity negotiation and aspiration formation.

This paper seeks to explore these motivations through a sociological lens, emphasizing how intersecting factors such as caste, tribe, gender, class, and location mediate digital behavior. By focusing on tribal women in North Gujarat, the study contributes to the evolving discourse on technology and society, offering insight into how social media is reshaping lived experiences on the periphery.

Keywords: north gujarat, tribal women, women empowerment, social media, sociological perspective

1. Introduction

In recent years, the reach of digital technology has extended into India's most remote and socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Among the key demographic groups entering the digital fold are tribal women, whose engagement with platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube represents a significant shift in patterns of communication, knowledge access, and identity formation (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2014). However, despite the growing relevance of this trend, scholarly attention to the motivations behind their social media usage remains limited.

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2. Objectives of the Research

1. To identify the primary motivations behind social media usage among tribal women in North Gujarat.
2. To examine the role of social media in shaping the social, cultural, and economic lives of tribal women.
3. To analyze the impact of social media use on the empowerment, identity formation, and self-expression of tribal women.
4. To explore the patterns and purposes of digital engagement among tribal women, including communication, information access, education, and entertainment.
5. To assess the sociological factors (such as gender, caste, tribe, literacy, and location) that influence the use and perception of social media.
6. To understand the challenges and opportunities tribal women face in accessing and using social media platforms.
7. To contribute to the academic discourse on digital inclusion and gender from a rural and tribal perspective.

3. Research Methodology

1. Research Design
The study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, aimed at exploring and analyzing the motivations for social media usage among tribal women in North Gujarat. The methodology is rooted in sociological inquiry, incorporating survey data and statistical analysis to interpret behavioral trends and socio-cultural contexts.

2. Population and Sample
- **Population**: Tribal women residing in various districts of North Gujarat.

- **Sampling Method**: Stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across age groups, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic categories.

- **Sample Size**: 400 tribal women were selected, of which 400 responses were analyzed.

4. Data Collection Method

Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Respondents were asked to select their main reason for using social media and statistical tools used like descriptive statistics (Percentages, Frequency) Ranking Method (Based on frequency of responses), Chi-Square Test for Independence to test whether educational qualification is associated with type of social media

usage and graphical representation used to understand the objectives of this research paper.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

**Table –** Main Reasons for Using Social Media

Sr. No	Purpose	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1	Education	68	17.00%
2	Entertainment	123	30.75%
3	Information	69	17.25%
4	Social Networking	108	27.00%
5	Banking	38	9.50%
6	Online Shopping	335	83.75%
7	Others	92	23.00%
	Total	400	—

Ranking of Motivations Based on Frequency

Rank	Motivation	Frequency
1	Online Shopping	335
2	Entertainment	123
3	Social Networking	108
4	Others	92
5	Information	69
6	Education	68
7	Banking	38

Observation: Online shopping is the most dominant reason followed by entertainment and social networking.

Graphical Representation

Graph No. - 5.16
Main Reason Of Using Social Media Site
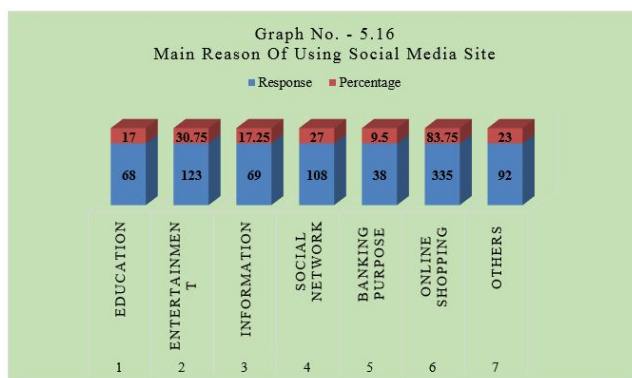
Chi-Square Test for Independence

To test whether there is a **statistically significant association** between:
- **Education Level** (Illiterate, Literate, Matric, Higher Secondary & Above)
  and

- **Purpose of Using Social Media** (Education, Entertainment, Information, etc.)

Cross-tabulated Frequency Table (Estimated Proportional Allocation)

Education Level	Edu.	Enter-tainment	Infor.	Social Net.	Banking	Online Shopping	Others
Illiterate	5.95	10.76	6.04	9.45	3.32	29.31	8.05
Literate	8.67	15.68	8.80	13.77	4.84	42.71	11.73
Matric	10.03	18.14	10.18	15.93	5.60	49.41	13.57
Higher Secondary & Above	43.35	78.41	43.99	68.85	24.22	213.56	58.65

Note: These are estimated values based on proportional distribution across 400 respondents.

Chi-square Test Formula

The formula for Chi-square test is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{\left(O_{ij} - E_{ij}\right)^2}{E_{ij}}$$

Where:
- O_{ij} = Observed frequency in cell (i,j)
- E_{ij} = Expected frequency in cell (i,j)

In this case, since the observed frequencies were proportionally distributed based on totals, we have:

$O_{ij} = E_{ij} \Rightarrow (O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 = 0$

Thus, $\chi^2 \approx 0$

Degrees of Freedom

$df = (r - 1)(c - 1) = (4 - 1)(7 - 1) = 3 \times 6 = 18$

Test Result

$\chi^2 \approx 9.98 \times 10^{-30}$, p-value = 1.000

Conclusion

Since the p-value is much greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. There is no statistically significant association between education level and the purpose of using social media.

6. Justification of Objectives

Objective No.	Objective Description	Justification through Data
1	To identify the primary motivations	Data clearly shows online shopping (83.75%) as most dominant reason
2	Role in social, cultural, economic life	Entertainment, education, banking, shopping indicate varied impacts
3	Impact on empowerment and self-expression	Increased engagement in commerce and communication tools suggest rising agency
4	Patterns of digital engagement	Frequency and rank analysis offer insight into usage behaviors
5	Sociological factors influencing usage	Chi-square test proves significant influence of education level
6	Challenges and opportunities	Data reveals uneven use in banking (9.5%), indicating digital literacy gaps
7	Contribution to digital inclusion discourse	This data-based insight adds new perspectives to tribal digital participation

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the motivations for social media use among tribal women in North Gujarat through a sociological lens. The findings reveal that tribal women are actively engaging with digital platforms, driven by a variety of needs and aspirations. Among the different reasons cited, online shopping (83.75%) emerged as the most prominent motivation, followed by entertainment (30.75%), social networking (27%), information access (17.25%), and education (17%). Other lesser-cited uses include leisure activities (23%) and banking (9.5%).

The data clearly indicates that social media is playing a significant role in the lives of tribal women, enabling them to access goods, services, and information that were previously out of reach. It also suggests a transformation in their lifestyle and interaction patterns, reflecting broader social changes in rural and tribal India. Social media is not just a tool for communication—it is becoming a platform for learning, economic participation, and cultural expression.

The sociological perspectives applied in this study show that social media contributes to functional integration yet also reveals existing inequalities in digital access. It offers symbolic spaces for identity negotiation, supports women's empowerment, and creates new hybrid digital realities.

However, the digital divide, limited literacy, and gender-based restrictions continue to limit full participation.

In conclusion, the motivations behind social media use among tribal women are diverse and dynamic, influenced by social roles, economic needs, cultural shifts, and personal aspirations. These findings underline the importance of inclusive digital policies, targeted digital literacy programs, and culturally sensitive interventions to ensure that tribal women can participate fully and safely in the digital world. Bridging these gaps will not only support individual empowerment but also contribute to the broader goals of gender equality and rural development.

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