

**YOUTH, NEW MEDIA, AND CULTURAL CHANGE: A SOCIO-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF CHAMBA (HIMACHAL PRADESH)****Sanjeev Kumar\***[sanjeevkc82@gmail.com](mailto:sanjeevkc82@gmail.com)

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**ABSTRACT:**

New media is a big part of young people's life these days. It brings both good and bad things, especially in places like Chamba in Himachal Pradesh that are rich in culture but hard to get to. This academic article looks at the complicated connection between young people, new media, and cultural change from a social and cultural point of view. The study's goal is to look at how modern media impacts the cultural practices and customs of Chamba's young; how it changes the way they interact with one other and form connections, and how it changes how they see themselves and their place in the community. The study used a mixed-method approach, which included structured surveys and interviews with college students. It found that while new media makes it easier to learn about and express creativity from around the world, it also leads to a slow decline in traditional practices, less participation in community events, and changes in social values. Furthermore, new media changes how young people see themselves, frequently making a divide between their cultural origins and their current digital lives. The report says that a good mix of media literacy, community involvement, and cultural education is necessary to protect Chamba's distinct cultural history while also taking advantage of the benefits of modern media.

**Keywords:**

Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, digital media, community belonging, cultural identity, social relationships, cultural change, and the impact on society.

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**1. INTRODUCTION:**

New media is becoming an important element of everyday life, especially for young people, in a world that changes quickly. New media has changed the way young people talk to each other, study, and express themselves. It includes social networking sites, instant messaging, digital entertainment, and online communities. This change is not just happening in cities; it's also happening in distant and culturally rich areas like Chamba, a beautiful district in Himachal Pradesh noted for its legacy, customs, and communal life. New media coming to these places presents both chances and problems. On the one hand, new media gives young people access to information from all over the world, lets them express themselves creatively, and gives them new avenues to study and interact with others. On the other hand, it raises big problems about the future of cultural identity, social values, and traditional rituals. In locations like Chamba, where language, festivals, and cultural traditions have been passed down through the years, the rise of new media is changing how young people interact with their culture and society in obvious ways. The main goal of this research paper is to look at how modern media affects the young of Chamba in terms of their culture and society. First, it looks at how modern media changes the cultural habits and traditions of young people. Second, it looks at how new media affects how they engage with others, make friends, and build relationships in the community. Third, it wants to know how modern media changes how young people see themselves and their place in society. The research tries to capture the changes, problems, and possibilities that digital media has brought by employing a mixed-method approach that includes both surveys and interviews with college-going teenagers in Chamba. The results show that new media may

help young people think of new ideas, be creative, and make new friends, but it can also erode traditional values, make individuals less likely to go to local events, and change their cultural identity. This study shows how important it is to find a balance between using new media and protecting cultural heritage. It says that teaching young people in Chamba about media, getting them involved in their communities, and learning about other cultures will help them utilize modern media intelligently while keeping connected to their origins.

### Significance of the Study

There are a number of reasons why this research is important. First, it gives us real-world examples of how the digital transition is affecting young people in a part of the world that isn't generally studied in mainstream media. Second, it shows how using modern media affects society and culture in a place where traditional values are still very important. Third, this study's results can help legislators, teachers, and community leaders come up with ways to encourage the appropriate use of new media while protecting cultural heritage.

### Objectives:

- To examine the influence How new media affects the cultural practices and traditions of young people
- To analyze How new media affects relationships and social interactions
- How New Media Affects Young People's Sense of Identity and Community

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

### • How new media affects the cultural practices and traditions of young people

New media, which includes social media, digital communication, and online material, has had a bigger and bigger impact on how cultural traditions are kept, performed, or changed. Appadurai (1996) and Castells (2010) are two scholars who say that globalization made possible by digital media lets cultural ideas traverse boundaries, which leads to hybrid identities and cultural dispersion.

Several studies in India (Sharma, 2018; Singh & Kaur, 2021) have shown that young people are less likely to take part in traditional festivals, folk arts, and religious practices because they are more interested in global media trends. Young people have been exposed to a wide range of cultural expressions because to the ease of access to modern media. This has frequently led to the destruction or change of local cultural traditions. Kumar's (2019) study on North Indian adolescents shows that social media has changed how culture is passed down, with digital content often taking the place of traditional knowledge and customs.

However, other researchers point out that modern media may also be used to bring back and promote local traditions (Basu, 2020). Digital storytelling, online cultural forums, and social media campaigns have all been used to show off regional festivals, music, food, and languages. These are all new avenues for young people to connect with their history.

### • How new media affects relationships and social interactions

Media and communication study has focused on how new media affects connections between people. Putnam (2000) came up with the term "bowling alone" to describe how people are spending less time with each other in person and more time communicating through technology. When it comes to young people, new media has changed a lot about how they make friends, socialize, and get involved in their communities.

Researchers (Lenhart et al., 2015; Boyd, 2014) have found that Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are the key ways that young people keep in touch with and make new friends. These platforms make it easier to connect with others, but they also make it harder to have real connections, spend less time with people in person, and deal with online harassment.

In rural and semi-urban areas of India, like Chamba(Himachal Pradesh), new media has helped young people engage with people outside of their usual social groups (Thakur & Chauhan, 2022). People are worried that close-knit community ties are getting weaker and that family and neighbourhood relationships are being ignored, which used to be quite important in the region's social life.

The "always-online" lifestyle has also led to problems including social isolation, cyber-dependence, and digital tiredness (Nalwa & Anand, 2003). There is also proof of a separation between generations. The younger generation prefers to do things online, while the elder age prefers to do things in person. This can sometimes cause problems between generations (Gupta, 2021).

### • How New Media Affects Young People's Sense of Identity and Community

More and more, internet platforms are used to help people build their identities in the digital era. Giddens (1991) says that identity in late modernity is reflexive and always changing. This is made worse by new media, because young people show edited versions of themselves on social media.

Livingstone (2009) and Turkle (2011) show that social media lets teens try out different identities, make online friends, and show off their uniqueness. New media has given young people in India access to global conversations on gender, sexuality, politics, and social justice. This has changed how they see themselves and their social connections (Chaudhuri, 2015).

In Chamba (Himachal Pradesh), where caste, religion, and geography have historically defined community, the internet world gives young people new ways to connect with others and shape their identities. Digital activism, online fandoms, and virtual peer groups all help people feel like they belong to more than one group (Katoch, 2023). But this change also causes problems between old-fashioned communal beliefs and new individualistic or global identities.

Research (Mehta & Sharma, 2022) suggests that while new media might help people express themselves and be more open, it can also cause cultural dislocation or identity uncertainty, especially for rural teens who are trapped between modern influences and traditional expectations. The effect on linguistic identity, notably the fact that fewer people are using regional languages online in favour of Hindi or English, is another issue (Negi, 2021).

### **Gaps in Literature and the Need for Regional Focus**

There is a lot of writing on how modern media affects young people throughout the world and in the US, but there isn't much study that looks at the specific social and cultural environment of Chamba (Himachal Pradesh). Localized studies are needed to understand how global media trends affect local values because of the state's unique topography, cultural diversity, and traditional community systems.

Also, most of the research that have been done thus far have focused on urban or metropolitan adolescents, leaving rural and semi-urban youth unexplored. There also has to be study that looks at both the good and bad effects of new media, especially when it comes to keeping culture alive and bringing people together.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to develop a nuanced understanding of how new media influences the cultural experiences, social interactions, and identity formation of youth in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh. By triangulating data from structured surveys and qualitative interviews, the study aims to capture both measurable trends and deeper personal insights.

#### **3.1 Sample Size**

The research is based on a sample of 150 young respondents, aged between 18 and 24 years, drawn from various degree colleges and professional institutions across the Chamba district. The selected age group represents a critical phase of social identity formation, active media usage, and cultural exploration, making it particularly relevant to the study's objectives. Care was taken to ensure demographic diversity in the sample, including representation across gender, caste categories (General, SC, ST, OBC, Minorities), economic backgrounds, educational disciplines (Arts, Commerce, Science, Professional), and geographic regions (rural/urban and tribal/non-tribal).

#### **3.2 Sampling Technique**

The study adopted a random sampling technique to minimize bias in participant selection and ensure representativeness. Students were randomly selected from college enrolment lists and approached during regular class sessions or cultural events, where they were invited to participate voluntarily. This approach provided a fair cross-section of the youth population in the region, enabling more generalizable findings within the Chamba district context.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Tools**

To collect data aligned with the study's three core objectives, two tools were employed:

##### **a) Structured Questionnaire**

A bilingual (English-Hindi) structured questionnaire was developed, containing 30 multiple-choice questions aligned with the following three research objectives:

- To examine how new media affects the cultural practices and traditions of young people.
- To analyze how new media influences interpersonal relationships and social interactions.
- To assess the role of new media in shaping youth identity and their sense of community.

The questionnaire was administered in printed and digital forms (via Google Forms), depending on participants' preference and accessibility. Likert-scale and multiple-response options were used to facilitate quantifiable responses suitable for statistical analysis.

#### **b) Semi-Structured Interviews**

To complement the quantitative data and capture the nuanced personal experiences of youth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of 20 participants drawn from the survey pool. The interviews explored participants' reflections on digital behaviour, cultural affiliations, social connections, and identity negotiations. Open-ended questions encouraged free expression and allowed for flexibility, making it possible to follow new leads and emerging themes during conversations.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

#### **a) Quantitative Analysis**

The questionnaire responses were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for systematic analysis.

- Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means were used to summarize responses and establish baseline trends.
- Inferential statistical tests, such as independent sample t-tests and correlation analysis, were employed to examine relationships between variables (e.g., gender and media impact, rural vs urban differences).

#### **b) Qualitative Analysis**

The interview data was transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Recurrent patterns and significant statements were coded under categories such as "media and tradition," "online vs offline identity," and "digital community engagement." This analysis helped provide contextual depth to the numerical trends observed in the survey and offered insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of media use.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. The purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances of confidentiality were clearly communicated in both verbal and written form. No personally identifiable information was used in the analysis or reporting. The study adheres to the ethical guidelines for academic research laid out by IEC University, Baddi.

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the key findings derived from the analysis of both quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires and qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews. The results are organized around the study's three primary objectives, with an additional focus on the emerging theme of positive cultural revitalization through new media.

### **4.1 Cultural Practices and Traditions**

The influence of new media on cultural practices and traditions among the youth of Chamba has been both disruptive and transformative. A significant 65% of respondents reported a decline in their participation in local cultural events such as traditional fairs (melas), folk performances, religious ceremonies, and community festivals. This decline appears to be partly driven by increased screen time, shifting interests, and the gradual detachment from physical community spaces.

However, this erosion of physical cultural engagement is counterbalanced by a digital resurgence of traditional expressions. Approximately 28% of participants acknowledged that they use platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube to share images, videos, and stories related to Himachali festivals, folk songs, regional attire, and food traditions. Such practices suggest the emergence of a new, digital form of cultural participation where heritage is re-imagined and celebrated in virtual spaces.

Insights from qualitative interviews further support these observations. Several college-going youth, particularly from urban areas like Chamba town and Bharmour, noted that exposure to global media through streaming platforms and social networks has altered b. Western influences, pop culture references, and meme culture were cited as shaping

everyday lifestyle choices. Yet, some interviewees also reflected on this as a double-edged sword, where modernity coexists with a lingering sense of loss in connection to traditional roots.

#### 4.2 Social Interactions and Relationships

Digital media is profoundly reshaping how young people in Chamba forge and sustain relationships. A notable 70% of respondents admitted that they spend more time online on social networking sites, gaming platforms, or messaging apps than participating in in-person social interactions within their community. This marks a major shift in socialization patterns, indicating the gradual weakening of face-to-face community ties.

On the positive side, many respondents shared that online platforms enable them to maintain long-distance friendships and family connections, especially with relatives working or studying outside Himachal Pradesh. Social media offers a convenient way to stay emotionally connected despite physical distance.

However, these benefits are tempered by concerns of emotional detachment and shallow interactions. More than 55% of participants reported that arguments, comparisons, and competition on social media have led to tensions or misunderstandings in real-life relationships. The pursuit of validation through likes, comments, or followers often results in stress and deterioration in offline relationship quality. Interview participants frequently mentioned feeling more lonely or anxious after prolonged digital engagement, despite being constantly connected.

#### 4.3 Identity and Community Belonging

The findings reveal that identity construction among Chamba's youth is increasingly influenced by their online presence and interactions. Many participants acknowledged that their digital persona differs significantly from their offline self, shaped largely by the desire for peer approval, curated aesthetics, and social trends. This digital self-performance reflects a complex negotiation between individual values and the collective expectations of virtual audiences.

Around 60% of respondents said they follow and engage with pages or accounts that promote Himachali culture, language, or regional pride. These digital communities provide a sense of belonging and help reinforce cultural identity, especially for those living in more cosmopolitan settings or away from their native villages. Through memes, reels, or storytelling content, youth are reclaiming regional narratives in creative formats.

Nonetheless, the study also uncovered growing instances of identity confusion and detachment from traditional community roles, particularly among those who spend a disproportionate amount of time on global platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or Reddit. The allure of trending content, influencer culture, and western lifestyles sometimes overshadows local customs and values, leading to a fragmented or hybrid cultural identity.

#### 4.4 Positive Cultural Shifts

The study shows that there are some encouraging patterns of cultural revival and creativity, even though digital media can be hard to deal with. More and more young people are adopting new media channels to record, protect, and share Chamba's cultural legacy. For instance, Instagram profiles that collect folk tales, local history, or traditional clothing have become new places for cultural information to be stored.

Some young people on YouTube are making Himachali folk music videos, language lessons, and oral history series that are popular both in and out of the state. Virtual storytelling sessions held on Zoom or social media have opened up new ways for people of different generations to share their cultures. These actions demonstrate that, although conventional participation in physical environments may be diminishing, youngsters are reconstituting cultural engagement in the digital era.

Interestingly, people from rural institutions and tribal areas like Pangri and Bharmour really liked these patterns. They stressed that modern media helps bring back old languages, customs, and stories, and makes regional culture easier for younger people to see and understand. This shows that technology can be a tremendous tool for preserving culture when it is used on purpose.

### 5. IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study show that the young of Chamba district are changing how they interact with culture, behave socially, and create their identities because of the extensive usage of new media. These shifts have significant consequences for educators, lawmakers, cultural institutions, and community stakeholders. If dealt with ahead of time, these effects can help young people use digital technology in a more balanced and culturally relevant way.

#### Interventions in Education

This study finds that one of the most important things that need to happen is for digital media literacy to be taught in schools. As more and more young people use digital platforms for news, entertainment, communication, and cultural

inquiry, it is important that they learn how to critically assess what they find online. Schools and colleges in Himachal Pradesh should add lessons on how to use the media responsibly, how to think critically, how to be ethical online, and how to be aware of other cultures to their programs. Such initiatives will not only assist young people avoid false information, dangerous material, and social comparison traps, but they will also give them the capacity to use digital tools for creative expression and cultural advocacy. Also, it's just as vital for teachers and parents to get training so they can help kids use the internet in a smart and balanced way.

### **Keeping culture alive through digital platforms**

The research emphasizes the necessity of rejuvenating traditional culture with modern methodologies. Because digital media has become such a big part of how young people from their identities and connect with culture, it is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to protect and promote Himachali traditions. Government agencies, NGOs, cultural institutions, and local artists should work together to make digital records of traditional music, dances, dialects, festivals, and oral histories. Making state-supported platforms or mobile apps that include fun and instructive information about Himachali culture will make it easier for younger people to learn about it and get interested in it. Giving young people money to work on digital initiatives like YouTube channels, Instagram ads, or podcasts on local history may also help them feel proud of their regional identity. Technology may be a stimulus for cultural continuity and creativity instead than a danger.

### **Using Media in a Balanced Way**

The results also show that young people are becoming less involved in real-life social activities and more involved in online activities. Too much time spent in front of screens and too much dependence on digital communication have caused people to become emotionally detached, lose their sense of self, and become less involved in their physical communities. To fix this, there should be public awareness efforts at the municipal, district, and state levels to encourage people to use technology in a healthy way and to get them to do things outside. These initiatives might have training on how to use the media, youth groups in the neighbourhood, storytelling festivals, and history walks that help young people get to know their surroundings again. Schools and universities should hold media detox days or digital-free cultural events to stress how important it is to talk to people in person and exchange cultural experiences. These kinds of programs can help young people find a balance between the advantages of digital media and their own communities and cultural identities.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Research shows that young people in the Chamba district are actively trying to find a balance between tradition and modernity in their everyday lives. In this context, new media platforms serve two purposes. Digital media has clearly made people less likely to go to cultural events like local fairs, religious festivals, and folk performances. Young people are spending less time with their friends in real life since they are so into online locations. This implies they are spending less time with other people in person and are steadily shifting away from traditional roles and ways of doing things.

Digital media, on the other hand, has also become a dynamic arena for people to express themselves and remake their cultures. Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are some of the places where young people may show off pieces of their culture, such folk music, traditional clothes, local stories, and dialects. They can even make new digital identities based on how proud they are of where they live. These websites help keep old customs alive and get individuals of various ages and backgrounds talking to each other. The digital world may link the past and the present, as well as the local and the global, as long as it is used with care and respect for other cultures.

This study underscores the advantageous potential of contemporary media, challenging the perception that it only erodes tradition. When used wisely, digital platforms may bring communities closer together, make history more interesting, and help young people understand more about who they are. The challenge is in striking a balance between ensuring that youth are technologically proficient and socially engaged, while also fostering cultural awareness and self-reflection. With the right combination of community initiatives, policy support, and educational programs, new media might transition from being a source of distraction to a powerful way to protect and create new culture in Himachal Pradesh and beyond.

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