

Social Media Use and Socio-Cultural Change among the Tamang Community of Nuwakot, Nepal

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media is used and how it is perceived to influence socio-cultural life among the Tamang community of Samundradevi, Nuwakot, Nepal. Based on a descriptive cross-sectional survey of 84 respondents, the article analyses patterns of platform use, access devices, purposes of use, cultural engagement, language practice, intergenerational relations, perceived content control, and overall views of digital media. The findings show that social media has become a regular part of everyday communication in the community. Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube are the most visible platforms, while mobile phones are the dominant means of access. Respondents mainly use social media for news and information, entertainment, and communication, although cultural posting around festivals, Sonam Lhosar, mela, jatras, and community events is also evident. The results present a balanced picture. Social media supports communication, awareness, community visibility, and some forms of cultural preservation; however, respondents also associate it with reduced face-to-face interaction, wider generational distance, unwanted content exposure, and cultural transformation toward more modern forms. The study argues that social media should not be understood only as a threat to tradition or as an automatic tool of preservation. Rather, it is a mediated cultural space where Tamang identity is being reworked, displayed, and transmitted. The article concludes that community-led, language-sensitive, and intergenerational digital practices are necessary if social media is to strengthen cultural continuity rather than replace deeper forms of cultural learning.

Keywords: Tamang community, social media, socio-cultural change, digital culture, cultural preservation, intergenerational relations

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a powerful part of contemporary social life. It shapes how people communicate, receive information, express identity, maintain relationships, and participate in public discussion. In Nepal, this shift is no longer limited to large cities. Digital platforms have entered semi-rural and rural communities through mobile phones, low-cost internet access, migration networks, and youth-centred patterns of media use. Social media now works not only as a communication technology but also as a social space where people negotiate visibility, belonging, aspiration, and cultural meaning.

For indigenous and ethnic communities, this change carries special importance. The Tamang are one of Nepal's major indigenous communities, with a rich heritage of language, ritual, kinship, oral tradition, ecological knowledge, and festival practice. Earlier studies have shown both the cultural depth of Tamang society and the structural pressures it faces. Acharya (2017), for example, links educational aspirations in a rural Tamang community with wider social conditions, while Tamang (2006) documents indigenous knowledge systems and warns that orally transmitted traditions become vulnerable when they are not recorded or passed on to younger generations.

Tamang culture, however, should not be imagined as fixed or unchanged. Dhakal (2018) shows that family structure, ritual practice, marriage customs, awareness, and everyday social behaviour have already been changing under the influence of modernization. Social media adds a new layer to this ongoing transition. It can help communities document festivals, share language, connect migrants with home villages, and increase cultural visibility. At the same time, it can weaken direct interaction, reshape taste, accelerate imitation of outside lifestyles, and create distance between elders and younger people.

This article addresses that issue by examining social media use among the Tamang community of Samundradevi, Nuwakot. The central concern is not whether social media is simply good or bad for Tamang culture. Rather, the study asks how respondents use it, what socio-cultural changes they associate with it, and whether they understand it as a force of cultural preservation, transformation, or both. By grounding these questions in survey evidence, the article contributes to debates on digital media, indigenous identity, cultural continuity, and everyday communication in Nepal.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the major patterns of social media use among Tamang respondents in Samundradevi, Nuwakot?
2. How do respondents perceive the socio-cultural and relational effects of social media in everyday community life?
3. Do respondents view social media mainly as a force of cultural preservation, cultural transformation, or both?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the Tamang community highlights a continuing relationship between cultural richness and social change. Tamang social life has historically been shaped by language, oral knowledge, ritual performance, kinship relations, and local ecological understanding. Tamang's (2006) ethnobiological study demonstrates the importance of indigenous knowledge in medicine and ritual life, but also points to the risk of knowledge loss when traditions remain undocumented and depend only on oral transmission. This concern is particularly relevant in the present digital age, where recording, circulation, and visibility increasingly influence cultural survival.

Other scholarship has drawn attention to the changing character of Tamang society. Dhakal (2018) observes that cultural practices, family patterns, ritual behaviour, and social awareness have been influenced by modernization. Acharya (2017) similarly shows that aspirations and opportunities are shaped by both cultural values and structural barriers. These studies suggest that Tamang communities are not passive recipients of change; they actively negotiate modern influences while trying to maintain meaningful links with tradition.

Studies of social media in Nepal also present a mixed picture. Gnawali (2020) finds that social media supports connection, information access, and awareness among youth, but may also reduce face-to-face interaction and create social or psychological strain. Regmi (2025) describes social media as a new social arena in Nepal where users perform identity, manage impressions, and negotiate the boundary between public and private life. Bhandari (2024) further reminds us that online spaces can also be shaped by manipulation, misinformation, and strategic use of digital content.

International literature on digital culture helps to deepen this discussion. Castells (2010) argues that networked communication reshapes social organization, while van Dijck (2013) shows that platforms do not simply connect people; they organize visibility, interaction, and social relationships. Jenkins et al. (2013) explain that digital media makes culture more shareable, although what circulates online is also shaped by platform logic and audience behaviour. boyd (2014) similarly shows that social media creates networked publics where visibility, identity, and social relationships are negotiated in everyday life. Yolanda et al. (2025) further suggest that social media can contribute to hybrid and global forms of cultural identity, a concern that is relevant when local communities engage with wider digital cultures.

Recent studies on algorithmic media add another important concern. Users do not fully control what becomes visible to them online. Platform systems can reinforce preferences, narrow exposure, and create echo chambers (Meghani & Tripathi, 2025; Putri et al., 2024). This matters for indigenous and minority communities because platform logic may favour entertainment, trends, and viral content over slower forms of local knowledge, ritual explanation, and mother-tongue communication.

Despite these useful contributions, limited work has examined how social media is perceived within specific indigenous communities in Nepal. The available literature discusses Tamang culture, modernization, social media use, and digital identity separately, but fewer studies bring these concerns together through community-level data. This study responds to that gap by linking social media practices with cultural visibility, language use, generational relations, and community cohesion among Tamang respondents in Nuwakot.

Theoretical and Analytical Lens

This article is guided by an integrated lens of digital mediation, cultural hybridity, and mediated community identity. Digital mediation suggests that media technologies do not merely carry messages; they shape the form, speed, visibility, and social meaning of communication (Hjarvard, 2013; van Dijck, 2013). In the case of the Tamang community, social media does not simply transfer existing cultural practices to online spaces. It changes how those practices are photographed, shared, commented on, remembered, and evaluated.

Cultural hybridity is also relevant because social media places local cultural practices in contact with wider national and global images, styles, and values. Bhabha's (1994) idea of hybridity helps explain how culture can be reworked through contact rather than simply lost. For example, a festival post on Facebook or TikTok may preserve a cultural event, but the way it is filmed, captioned, edited, and circulated may also modernize its meaning. The result is not pure continuity or total erosion, but a mixed form of cultural expression.

Finally, mediated community identity helps explain why social media may both unite and strain community life. Online platforms can connect relatives, migrants, villagers, and youth groups across distance. However, they may also reduce elder-centred learning, weaken direct conversation, and shift cultural authority from family and community spaces toward peer networks and algorithmically curated content. This framework allows the study to interpret social media as a cultural interface: a space where identity, belonging, memory, and change are constantly negotiated.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. It focused on the Tamang community of Samundradevi, Nuwakot, and examined respondents' social media use and perceptions of socio-cultural change at one point in time. A descriptive design was appropriate because the aim was to identify broad patterns of use, perception, cultural engagement, and relational effects rather than to test causal relationships.

The survey included 84 respondents from the Tamang community. Respondents were selected through a non-probability purposive sampling approach, because the study specifically required participants from the Tamang community of Samundradevi who had experience using social media. The questionnaire was structured in simple language and covered demographic characteristics, platforms used, access devices, purposes of use, time spent on social media, posting behaviour, language use, cultural posting, perceived communication effects, perceived cultural effects, intergenerational relations, content control, and overall opinion.

Some questions allowed multiple responses; therefore, percentages in those tables do not necessarily total 100 percent. All percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. Completed responses were reviewed for completeness and consistency before being organized into frequency and percentage tables. Since the available dataset contains summarized survey results rather than raw individual-level responses, the study does not apply inferential statistical tests. The findings are therefore presented as context-specific evidence from one Tamang community, not as statistically representative conclusions about all Tamang communities in Nepal.

Basic research ethics were followed during the study. Respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the research, participation was voluntary, and personal identities were not reported in the presentation of findings. The analysis is organized into four broad areas: demographic profile, social media usage patterns, socio-cultural and relational effects, and overall evaluation of social media. The literature and theoretical lens are then used to interpret the findings in relation to digital mediation, cultural continuity, language practice, generational change, and community cohesion.

The main limitations of the study are the small sample size, non-probability sampling, and the absence of detailed qualitative interview or focus group data. Future studies could strengthen this work by adding life-history interviews, focus group discussions with elders and youth, and comparison with other indigenous or rural communities.

RESULTS

This section presents the survey findings from 84 respondents in the Tamang community of Samundradevi, Nuwakot. For clarity and compact presentation, the results are presented in eight consolidated tables. The tables combine closely related indicators without changing the original frequencies or percentages. The findings are organized around demographic characteristics, social media use, cultural engagement, language and communication, socio-cultural change, community impact, content control, and overall opinion.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The sample was relatively young, with the largest group below 18 years of age. Female respondents slightly outnumbered male respondents. Non-formal education was the most common educational category, while agriculture and student status were the two most common occupational backgrounds.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Age group	Below 18	27	32%
	18-25	10	12%
	26-35	19	23%
	36-45	14	17%
	46 and above	14	17%
Gender	Male	36	43%
	Female	48	57%
	Other	0	0%
Education	Non-formal education	44	52%
	Primary	3	4%
	Secondary	20	24%
	Higher secondary	17	20%
	Bachelor and above	0	0%

Occupation	Agriculture	32	38%
	Business	7	8%
	Service	7	8%
	Students	27	32%
	Others	11	13%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

These figures show that the respondents came largely from a youthful and educationally uneven population in which farming and student life remain important social realities. This background matters because the meaning and effects of social media are influenced by age, education, occupation, and access to cultural resources.

2. Social Media Usage Patterns

Facebook was the most widely used platform, followed by Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube. Mobile phones were by far the most common device for access. Respondents mainly used social media for news and information, entertainment, and communication.

Table 2. Social Media Usage Patterns: Platforms, Devices, and Purposes

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Platform used	Facebook	68	81%
	YouTube	53	63%
	TikTok	55	65%
	Messenger	57	68%
	WhatsApp	25	30%
	Other	5	6%
Access device	Mobile phone	78	93%
	Tablet	4	5%
	Laptop	2	2%
	Computer	0	0%
	Other	0	0%
Purpose of use	Communication	42	50%
	Entertainment	58	69%
	News and information	59	70%
	Cultural content	14	17%
	Education	17	20%

	Other	0	0%
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Source: Field survey, 2026.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed for platform used and purpose of use.

The results indicate that social media has become embedded in everyday life. Its use is practical, recreational, and communicative. Although cultural content and education were not the leading purposes, their presence in the data suggests that social media is also used for learning and cultural visibility.

3. Time Spent and Type of Social Media Activity

A substantial number of respondents reported extended daily use of social media. The largest group spent more than two hours per day online. The data also show that respondents were more likely to view content than to post actively.

Table 3. Time Spent and Primary Activity on Social Media

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Time spent per day	Less than 30 minutes	8	10%
	30 minutes-1 hour	21	25%
	1-2 hours	26	31%
	More than 2 hours	29	35%
Primary activity	View a lot, post sometimes	36	43%
	View others' posts daily and also post daily	10	12%
	Post frequently, view others' posts less	5	6%
	Only view others' posts, do not post myself	33	39%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

This pattern suggests that respondents are more often consumers than creators of online content. Passive or semi-active engagement is important because cultural preservation through social media depends not only on viewing posts but also on producing meaningful content in local language and cultural forms.

4. Social Connections and Cultural Engagement

Respondents most often used social media to stay connected with family members or friends living abroad, followed by family members and villagers. Cultural posting was also visible, especially around festivals, mela, jatras, Sonam Lhosar, and community events.

Table 4. Social Connections and Cultural Engagement on Social Media

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Family members	31	37%

Persons connected with	Villagers	29	31%
	Family/friends living abroad	37	44%
	Only Tamang community members outside the village	11	13%
	Members of different communities	14	17%
Cultural posts and updates	Live updates	35	42%
	Posts on Sonam Lhosar	33	39%
	Posts on festivals, mela, and jatras	49	58%
	Posts on community events/picnics	33	39%
	Others	37	44%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

These findings show that social media is not limited to entertainment or private conversation. It also functions as a space for symbolic community expression. Festival posts, live updates, and community event photos make local culture visible to migrants, relatives, and wider audiences beyond the village.

5. Language Use and Communication Effects

Nepali was the most commonly used language on social media, but Tamang also had a visible presence. A majority of respondents believed that social media had increased communication, although many also felt that it had reduced face-to-face interaction.

Table 5. Language Use and Perceived Communication Effects

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Language used	Tamang	32	38%
	Nepali	61	73%
	English	23	27%
	Other	9	11%
Communication effect	Increased communication	50	60%
	Decreased face-to-face talk	23	27%
	No change	16	19%
	Increased misunderstandings	12	14%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed.

The findings suggest a dual communication effect. Social media expands contact, especially across distance, but it may also weaken direct conversation within family and village life. The use of Nepali more than Tamang also indicates that online communication may support wider visibility while still placing pressure on mother-tongue expression.

6. Socio-Cultural Change and Intergenerational Relations

Most respondents felt that social media had contributed to cultural transformation toward modernization. At the same time, many believed that it had widened the gap between generations.

Table 6. Perceived Socio-Cultural Change and Intergenerational Relations

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Perceived cultural impact	Cultural transformation toward modernization	54	64%
	Loss of traditional culture	18	21%
	Introduced distortion and decay	17	20%
	Helps adaptation to change	12	14%
	Other	3	4%
Effect on generations	Increased distance	37	44%
	Decreased distance	16	19%
	Brings together in one place	11	13%
	No effect	20	24%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed for perceived cultural impact.

These responses show that social media is perceived more as a force of change than as a force of stability. Some respondents see it as helping adaptation, but many connect it with modernization, cultural loss, distortion, and greater distance between elders and younger people.

7. Benefits, Community Impact, and User Control

Respondents strongly recognized the positive side of social media, especially in relation to information, awareness, and knowledge. Many also believed that social media had united the Tamang community. However, the data on content control show a more complicated situation.

Table 7. Benefits, Community Impact, and Content Control

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
	Increased knowledge	52	62%

Perceived benefit	Information and awareness	53	63%
	Preservation of Tamang culture and language	28	33%
	Connected with friends and social circle	23	27%
	Easier search for opportunities	22	26%
	No effect	0	0%
Community impact	United	56	67%
	Divided	4	5%
	Both	13	15%
	No effect	11	13%
Content control	Yes, I can control it	37	44%
	No, I cannot	20	24%
	Exposed to unwanted content	15	18%
	Only content I want appears	12	14%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Note: Multiple responses were allowed for perceived benefits.

The findings suggest that respondents value social media as a source of information and community connection, but they do not always feel fully in control of the content they encounter. This is important because digital platforms shape exposure through recommendation systems, trending content, and peer circulation, not only through individual choice.

8. Overall Opinion on Social Media

The overall assessment of social media was largely favourable. More than half of the respondents expressed a positive opinion, while more than one-third remained neutral. Only a small minority expressed a negative view.

Table 8. Overall Opinion of Respondents on Social Media

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very positive	5	6%
Positive	43	51%
Neutral	29	35%
Negative	7	8%
Very negative	0	0%

Source: Field survey, 2026.

Taken together, the results present a balanced picture. Social media is widely accepted and often viewed as useful, but respondents are also aware of its role in cultural transformation, reduced face-to-face interaction, unwanted content exposure, and generational strain.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that social media has become an ordinary part of daily life in the Tamang community of Samundradevi. The dominance of mobile phones, the popularity of Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube, and the use of digital platforms for information, entertainment, and communication all point to a community that is already deeply connected to networked media. This finding is consistent with broader Nepali scholarship that describes social media as a growing social space for identity, interaction, and public visibility (Regmi, 2025).

At the cultural level, the evidence does not support a simple story of decline. Nor does it support an overly optimistic claim that social media automatically preserves culture. The largest group of respondents saw social media as contributing to cultural transformation toward modernization, while smaller but meaningful groups expressed concern about cultural loss, distortion, and decay. This supports Dhakal's (2018) observation that Tamang society is already changing under wider modern influences. Social media appears to accelerate that process by turning culture into something that is not only practiced in community spaces but also displayed, edited, circulated, and evaluated online.

The data on cultural posting are especially important. Posts about festivals, Sonam Lhosar, mela, jatras, live updates, and community events show that digital platforms have become part of ritual visibility. A festival that was once mainly experienced in the village can now be recorded and shared with relatives abroad, friends in other districts, and younger people who may not be physically present. In this sense, social media can become a small digital archive of community life. This is valuable for a community whose traditions have often depended on oral and embodied transmission (Tamang, 2006).

However, visibility should not be confused with depth. A photo, short video, or festival update can keep a cultural event visible, but it may not fully transmit the meaning of ritual language, oral history, elder knowledge, or moral values attached to that practice. This is where the tension between cultural preservation and cultural simplification becomes visible. Digital culture can preserve images of tradition while reducing the time and attention needed to understand tradition deeply.

The language findings also reveal an important cultural issue. Nepali is used more frequently than Tamang on social media, although Tamang remains visible. This pattern may help respondents communicate with wider audiences, but it may also reduce the everyday digital presence of the mother tongue. If younger users mostly produce content in Nepali or in mixed-language forms, Tamang language may remain symbolically important but less actively practiced online. Therefore, cultural preservation through social media requires deliberate language-sensitive content, not only festival photographs or general community posts.

The findings on intergenerational relations are equally significant. Many respondents believed that social media increased communication, but a large group also felt that it reduced face-to-face talk and increased distance between generations. This means that more communication does not always produce stronger relationships. Social media may connect migrants with home communities and friends with each other, but it can also shift attention away from family conversations, elder storytelling, and everyday village interaction. In cultural terms, this may move learning from elder-centred spaces toward peer-centred and screen-mediated spaces.

The responses about content control add another layer to the discussion. A noticeable proportion of respondents said they could not fully control what they saw or were exposed to unwanted content. Although respondents may not use academic terms such as algorithmic curation or echo chambers, their experience reflects wider concerns in digital media studies. Platforms shape what becomes visible, repeated, and emotionally engaging (Meghani

& Tripathi, 2025; Putri et al., 2024). For minority and indigenous communities, this matters because platform logic may favour entertainment and viral trends over slower, locally meaningful cultural knowledge.

Overall, the study suggests that social media has become a new cultural interface for the Tamang community. It supports communication, information, community unity, and cultural visibility. At the same time, it introduces pressures of modernization, passive consumption, language shift, fragmented attention, and generational distance. The most useful question, therefore, is not whether social media should be accepted or rejected. The more practical question is how the community can use it consciously so that digital visibility becomes a support for cultural continuity rather than a replacement for living cultural practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings suggest several practical recommendations for community leaders, educators, youth groups, cultural organizations, local media actors, and local government bodies:

- Encourage the production of Tamang-language digital content, including short videos, captions, songs, oral histories, and explanations of ritual meanings.
- Use social media not only for festival display but also for cultural education, such as explaining the meaning of Sonam Lhosar, local rituals, kinship practices, and traditional knowledge.
- Create intergenerational digital projects in which youth record elders' stories, cultural memories, songs, and local histories with consent and proper contextual explanation.
- Develop community-based digital literacy programmes that teach users how algorithms, misinformation, privacy settings, and unwanted content exposure work.
- Encourage balanced media habits so that online connection does not replace face-to-face family conversation, community gathering, and elder-youth learning.
- Promote collaboration among schools, local governments, cultural groups, and media practitioners to archive and circulate culturally accurate content.

CONCLUSION

This study examined social media use and socio-cultural change among the Tamang community of Samundradevi, Nuwakot. Based on survey data from 84 respondents, it found that social media is now a regular part of everyday communication and information access, mainly through mobile phones. Facebook, Messenger, TikTok, and YouTube dominate usage, while news and information, entertainment, and communication are the major purposes.

The findings show that social media is influencing Tamang socio-cultural life in multiple and sometimes contradictory ways. It helps respondents stay informed, remain connected, and make cultural events more visible. Many respondents also see it as a force that unites the community. At the same time, concerns remain about decreased face-to-face communication, increased generational distance, unwanted content, and cultural transformation toward modern or distorted forms.

The study concludes that social media is best understood as a double-edged cultural force. It creates new possibilities for expression, visibility, and connection, but it also reshapes how tradition is practiced, represented, and transmitted. For the Tamang community, the future value of social media will depend on whether it remains mainly a space of passive consumption or becomes a space of active cultural responsibility. Community-led, language-sensitive, and intergenerational digital practices can help ensure that social media supports cultural continuity instead of weakening the deeper relationships through which culture is learned and lived.

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