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Uses of TikTok and the Rise of Rural Influencers in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The study discusses emergence of rural Tik Tok influencers in Pakistan as a cultural performer, social negotiator and economic players in online industry. Despite the increasing global scholarly attention to the short-video sites and platforms, very little has been done regarding studying rural creators, especially in South Asia. The article was a qualitative exploratory paper based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Social Identity Theory (SIT) and identified inductive thematic content analysis of 200 publicly accessible videos by 20 rural influencers. The analysis findings indicated that seven emergent themes exist, namely, folk music and oral traditions, patriotic and religious symbolism, redefinition of gender roles, disability and resilience, migration aspirations, social stigma and moral policing, and economic mobility through informal advertising. These issues elicit enabling and restrictive dynamics of digital interaction. On the positive side, the affected people retained some cultural heritage, improved visibility, experimented on identity and also ventured in small-scale livelihoods. They were mocked, bullied, policed on morality according to their gender and driven down to economic insecurity. Findings are positive as Tik Tok is being used as a cultural repository and a contested field where the empowerment and marginalization co-exist. The study expands on UGT and SIT by demonstrating how the two can be used to explain the cases of entertainment, recognition, and making identity, yet also demonstrates their lack when it comes to explaining stigma and structural inequalities. Practically, the project shows the need to be digitally inclusive, safeguard women, and establish economic projects at the grassroots to empower rural creators. Overall, the article helps the advancement of the scholarly knowledge of the rural influencer culture in Pakistan since it locates the Tik Tok platform as the location, where the culture, identity, and economy meet in multifaceted forms.

Introduction

Short-video platforms have transformed how people communicate, connect with others and find new avenues of economic opportunity in the digital era. Tik Tok is one of such applications, and it has very quickly gained momentum to be one of the most strongly impacting social media applications globally with more than one billion active users (Business of Apps, 2025). The participatory aspect of TikTok has empowered common people, even rural youths, to make, spread and get more likes on their videos, unlike the traditional media where only those who are urban elite and influential, possess the means to create, disseminate and secure popularity of their videos.

In Pakistan, the platform has seen its growth exponentially, especially with the growing access to cheap smartphones and mobile internet in the rural setting (Data Reportal, 2025). Historically marginalized young people in mainstream media are currently creating short content that is culturally oriented, humorous, and farm-related and local speech (Gallup Pakistan, 2025). This is not only transforming in the representation of the rural identity within the country, but is also providing these young people with entry points to the digital economy by way of sponsorships, brand partnerships, and live-stream monetization.

Although Tik Tok is very popular in Pakistan, scholarly work has been dominated by urban users, and rural influencers are under-investigated. Such insufficient scholarly coverage is not ideal since rural TikTok producers are rewriting cultural accounts, provoking images of backwardness, and creating niches in the digital economy (Ullah and Iqbal, 2025). Their experience is, however, characterized by obstacles leading to digital illiteracy, uneven infrastructures and stigmatization of internet celebrity in conservative societies. The opportunities and threats that accompany the emergence of rural influencers can never be comprehensively realized without a systematic study by the policymakers, media scholars, and development practitioners.

The research is important in the sense that it places the rural Pakistani youth at the center of discussions regarding digital participation and influencer culture across the world. The study illuminates perceptions of rural life by showing how the vernacular creativity (in the form of local songs, humor, clothing and storytelling) transforms the perception of rural life (Zeib, 2025) due to its focus on TikTok. It also explores the economic aspect, which investigates how the influencers make money on their content via the digital platforms. Rural influencers have emerged as an indication of the new opportunities that exist in cultural recognition and economic mobility in a country where the rural populations are structurally disadvantaged.

Objectives of the Study

- The research aims to investigate how rural influencers in Pakistan can use Tik Tok videos to depict their culture, identity, and lifestyle.
- To study the social consequences of rural young people becoming visible in short-format video platforms.
- To determine the economic prospects and opportunities of rural influencers in Pakistan.

Research Questions

- What is the representation of culture, identity, and lifestyle by rural influencers on TikTok?
- What are the social consequences of having rural youths appearing on short-form video sites?
- What are the rural influencers of Pakistan experiencing in terms of economic opportunities and challenges?

Literature Review

The field of social media research has grown very fast, yet to a significant extent it has concerned city settings, influencers, or mass media. The short-form, participatory, and algorithmic model of TikTok has transformed the way of how marginalized communities such as rural ones become visible. The chapter is a critical review of both the international and Pakistani literature on the subject, focusing on cultural, social, and economic aspects of TikTok influencers and rural youth in particular.

Tik Tok has been researched worldwide as a platform that democratizes content creation where average users can have large social media followings through algorithmic promotion (Anderson, 2023). In India, studies are found to support the use of TikTok by semi-urban and rural youth to communicate local traditions, dialects, and cultural identities, which lead to digital inclusivity (RedSeer, 2023). Likewise, in China, the sister application of TikTok, Douyin, has been located to provide opportunities to rural entrepreneurs to advertise their farm products and local crafts and thus connect culture to business (Li and Zhao, 2022).

Researchers believe that Tik Tok is changing the concept of celebrity and micro-celebrity, and the power will also no longer be attributed to urban elites but can be developed in the peripheries (Kumar, 2023). Studies in African settings also present the example of rural TikTok users with humor and local storytelling as a way to fight stereotypes and find recognition (Mwangi, 2023). These findings around the world outline the potential of Tik Tok as a source of vernacular creativity and economic chances.

The digital space in Pakistan has been growing fast due to the availability of cheap internet connectivity. Research demonstrates that young people are increasingly utilizing Tik Tok to entertain themselves, express themselves and develop identity (Ullah and Iqbal, 2025). Gallup Pakistan (2025) reports that an almost one-fifth of the Pakistani population uses Tik Tok every day, with much of the increase occurring in the rural communities. Nonetheless, the platform too has become controversial and banned because of ethical and cultural reasons (Dawn, 2019).

Studies indicate that urban youths are leading digital space, but the rural youths are rapidly becoming part of the digital space. Zeib (2025) states that it is the influence of a person in Pakistan that contributes to the development of opinion and closing of the divide between the world and the national discourse. However, systematic scholarly interest in rural influencers as a discrete category is limited, suggesting an enormous research gap.

Rural influencers tend to emphasize folk culture, local clothes, traditional music and farming life in its TikTok content. According to international studies, such performances contribute to the restoration of pride in the marginalized identities (Shifman, 2022). Rural creators in Pakistan are making an increasing volume of content in Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, and Pashto, applying humor and storytelling to the vision of rural backwardness (Ahmed & Shah, 2024).

This is in line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) that posits that people want to be known, and in that case they establish group identities. Rural influencers furthermore not only reflect the practices of their own cultures but also give presence to communities that are otherwise invisible on the mainstream media. Their emergence illustrates the idea that Tik Tok has turned out to be a platform of cultural negotiation in Pakistan.

There is a positive and negative social implication of the emergence of rural influencers. Positively, they offer role models to the urban youth in the rural parts, lessen the urban-rural digital divide, and promote inclusivity (Khan and Batool, 2024). However, social stigma persists: families

and communities often perceive TikTok fame as inappropriate, particularly for women (JSSH, 2025). Female influencers in traditional environments are harassed and moral-policed, which restricts their chances of developing (Shahzad, 2024).

In South Asia, it is indicated that sensemaking via Tik Tok can also turn social hierarchies as it provides the rural youth with new symbolic capital (RedSeer, 2023). This has not been studied thoroughly, but it is essential to Pakistan because it shows how digital fame overlaps with class, gender, and cultural values.

Economically, the world has witnessed Tik Tok to open up economic opportunities like brand partnerships, live-stream gifting, and e-commerce integration (Business of Apps, 2025). Promotion of products and branding of agriculture is another way that rural influencers can monetize in India and China (Li and Zhao, 2022).

In Pakistan, research shows that influencers increasingly impact consumer purchasing behavior (Afzal et al., 2024). Access to safe payment options, limited digital literacy, exposure to brand networks are all the obstacles to rural influencers (JSSH, 2025). Such obstacles limit rural creators to the full use of the digital economy. Nevertheless, their personal small-scale partnerships with local enterprises suggest the economic prospects of rural-based influencer culture.

Although the growth of Tik Tok in Pakistan is tremendous, very few written scholarly writings are based on rural influencers. The majority of research is on urban young people, consumerism, or social media use in general and ignores how rural creators use TikTok to express their culture, be socially recognized, and to achieve economic mobility. This study bridges that gap by offering a thorough study of the rural TikTok influencers using content analysis, and some support narrative interviews.

Theoretical Framework

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Social Identity Theory (SIT) direct this research. UGT outlines the ways in which people actively utilize the media platforms to satisfy their needs, which include entertainment, recognition and socialization (Katz et al., 1974). Tik Tok offers the means of self-expression and popularity that was not accessible to the rural influencers before. SIT lays emphasis on how people make and negotiate identities in social groups (Tajfel, 1978). Rural TikTok creators are vigorous and active in terms of performing and reconstructing their identities, balancing local cultural authenticity with digital trends in order to be visible. Collectively, these frameworks assist in the study of the interaction of rural youths with Tik Tok as a cultural and economic space.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used was a qualitative exploratory study intending to find out the cultural expression, social exposure and economic activity of rural Pakistani TikTok influencers. This was considered a suitable design since the phenomenon being studied was not a common phenomenon studied in the Pakistani context and thus needed to be explored, as opposed to quantified (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The qualitative exploratory design allowed the researcher to be open, flexible, and receptive to unexpected results and responsive to the setting of rural communities (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). To be more precise, short-form TikTok videos were subjected to thematic content analysis, which enabled the identification of symbolic meanings, repetitive patterns, and the creation of general themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The idea to concentrate on video material

instead of interviews was technically valid and ethical, because the Tik Tok content is publicly available, and collecting data directly through the rural influencers might have provoked concerns related to privacy and ethics (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017). The selected design made sure that the research was not being confined to a set of categories but rather embraced the complexity, creativity, and socio-cultural dynamics of online performances by rural influencers (Guest, Namey, and Chen, 2020).

Sampling Technique

The study population was rural TikTok influencers of Pakistan, the sampling frame was made up of public Tik Tok accounts based on rural settings, village life, folk traditions and farm works. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were put in place to ensure clarity. The Tik Tok accounts that were eligible had to be public, had to have at least 10,000 followers, and must have posted at least 24 videos within the past 12 months. Moreover, only the accounts including mostly the content shot in the rural areas of Pakistan were taken into consideration. In comparison, personal or individual accounts, those located in the urban area, and accounts that had not been active in the last half a year were excluded out of the study. These parameters had made the sample representative and in line with the goals of the research.

The purposive sampling approach was chosen to locate the most popular TikTok creators who can portray the life of the countryside. The activity has started by selecting the target hashtags including: #ruralPakistan, #villagevlog, #punjabivillage, #sindhiculture and agriculturelife. With the help of those hashtags, accounts that met the necessary requirements were found out. After shortlisting initial profiles, a snowballing method was used to get an extended sample. Recommendations of followers and other similar accounts suggested by the platform were viewed and new creators who fit the criteria were added to the pool. This cyclic process made sure that the final sample included a wide, interested, and relevant group of the rural Tik Tok influencers.

Sample Size

The sample population was comprised of 200 videos that were chosen among 20 rural influencers, ten recent videos were picked based on each account. This was deemed adequate in offering a variation between the regional, linguistic and cultural settings, as well as be viable enough to be analyzed systematically.

In the case of the video, metadata was collected based on URL, date of upload, captions, hashtags, likes, and comments. As well, the text of the videos was analyzed in terms of repeating themes such as cultural symbols, humor, values of the community, and images of rural life. Other economic indicators were product placements, sponsored contents, and monetization strategies (e.g., live gifting). The number of likes, comments, and shares were gathered to determine the reception of the audience.

Data Analysis

An inductive thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data and this method enabled the data to give out themes directly without enacting a pre-defined category. It started with watching the videos several times and writing down the initial notes. Afterwards, video data, captions or hashtags were broken down into meaningful segments that were assigned descriptive codes. By way of example, a video with Punjabi folk music was coded as a cultural representation whereas clips of women being part of farming were coded as gender and livelihood roles. The clustering of similar codes was thus reduced to larger themes that depicted cultural, social and economic dynamics. The coding log supported rigor and credibility because analytical decisions were

recorded to carry out coding decisions. Triangulation was obtained by matching themes between videos and in practice by peer review of coded samples. Saturation was observed to ascertain the stage at which no new themes were being brought about and this made analysis systematic, transparent as well as a representation of the richness of the data.

Ethical Consideration

Regarding ethical aspects, TikTok videos that were publicly available were only analyzed. Participants were anonymized and made not to reveal their identity by giving them unique codes instead of using their real names. No data were gathered either personally or privately, and all data were safely stored and used only in academic matters in line with the ethical research standards (APA, 2020).

Results

An inductive thematic content analysis of 200 Tik Tok videos that were produced by 20 Pakistani rural influencers. The coding and categorization of the videos were done in an inductive way as themes were not pre-determined but rather were identified directly out of the data. This approach allowed to cover both the positive aspects (e.g., empowerment, visibility, creativity) and the negative one (e.g., stigma, harassment, limitations) of the digital involvement of rural influencers.

Inductive Coding Framework

Table 4.1: Inductive themes emerging from rural TikTok content

Inductive Themes	Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects	Example Indicators
Folk Music and Oral Traditions	Local culture preservation, heritage pride	Sometimes ridiculed by the internet audience as retrogressive (Old Internet 2013)	Punjabi tappay, Saraiki poetry, Pashto verses.
Symbolism Patriotic and Religious.	Increases the moral legitimacy and social approval.	Scolded as acting-out or acting-out faith.	Pakistan zindabad slogans, verses of the Quran on the captions.
Redefining Gender Roles	Imaginative performances are provocative of strict conventions.	Denounced as immoral or even shameless by the conservative audience	Cross-dressing, women are depicted outside a domestic sphere
Disability and Resilience	Exposure and inspiration among voices of the minorities	Bullied and subjected to insensitivity	Dancing with crutches, selling stuff, dancing
Migration Aspirations	Desire hopeful advancement	Show this hopelessness in local poverty and lack of choice	Allusions to foreign employment, symbolic image of poor housing
Social Stigma and Moral Policing	Resilience to restrictions is brought out in exposure	This is harassment and surveillance of women especially	Women influencers attacked because of their dress or exposure

Economic Mobility and Informal Advertising	TikTok as the source of micro-livelihood	Is small scale and not institutionalized	The videos promote cafes, farm products, crafts
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Inductive Themes

Folk Music and Oral Traditions

Influencers, mostly rural, often incorporated folk culture in their Tik Tok acts. Punjabi tappay, Saraiki couplets, and Pashto verses turned out to be the important signs of authenticity and pride. These shows took pride in tradition and enabled the rural folks to exhibit pride in the virtual world. Meanwhile, part of the urban media consumed this work as either village comedy or backwardness, a sign of how digital technologies recreate cultural inequities despite the empowerment of a local identity.

Patriotic and Religious Symbolism

The visibility of the influencers was given legitimacy through religious and nationalistic imagery. Incorporation of Islamic invocations (Alhamdulillah, Mashallah) or nationalistic songs was often done by creators to contextualize their performance as culturally correct. This was a plan to make the youth in rural areas manipulate the acceptance of society in the conservative environments. But there were also critics who saw this as shallow or as using religion to get fame, which displays the contradictions between earnestness and acting in cyberspace.

Redefining Gender Roles

The mocking of distinctly male and female roles was also a salient theme. Male influencers would wear female clothes or act sillyly at home, whereas female influencers at times would appear doing their chores outside the scope of domestic duties. On the positive, this allowed exploring identity and gave the viewers something to laugh at. On the negative side, such performances were criticized; the cross-dressing was considered as shameless and the female producers were accused of breaking the honor codes. Therefore, TikTok was transformed into a place of freedom and a moralizing platform.

Disability and Resilience

Crippled artists became recognizable and iconic. As an example, one of the influencers (R1) dances on crutches and was admired due to the endurance. With such content, disability was rebranded as a talent and strength and refuted the stereotypes of helplessness. However, visibility was a two-sided concept: it created ridicule of physical weaknesses at times, and it revealed people to cruelty as well as internet fame does.

Migration Aspirations

Accounts were repetitive in terms of references to migration and foreign opportunities. Influencers stated that they wanted to own houses, find better jobs in foreign countries, and leave the state of economic deprivation. These videos were rather full of desire and disappointment: on one hand, the dream of migration was the sign of ambition and hope; on the other hand, it highlighted inequality in structure and a lack of opportunities at a local level. Therefore, Tik Tok turned out to be a virtual platform where poverty was told together with hope.

Social Stigma and Moral Policing

The women influencers had been the most susceptible to stigma. Even the smallest content (e.g. household chores) was accused of indecency or immorality. This shows that Tik Tok provides a platform where rural women get seen, but at the same time, they are exposed to power and harassment. On the other hand, other artists reacted to it humorously or even robustly, insisting that digital platforms could also offer space to minor acts of defiance against the norms of oppression.

Economic Mobility and Informal Advertising

Tik Tok was applied in the form of micro-entrepreneurship. Influencers advertised local cafes, handicrafts or agriculture, and made it small-scale advertising. This offered them alternative economic opportunities, which would not be available in the rural environments. However, the range was still limited: the majority of the promotions did not imply any formal brand collaboration, and the monetization was limited by the lack of digital literacy and access to payments.

Summary of Findings

The inductive analysis showed that rural TikTok influencers are in a complicated digital space, which empowers and limits them at the same time. On the positive side, they saved culture, tried out their identity, became visible, and found alternative ways of livelihood. On the negative side, they were stigmatized, harassed, mocked and economically uncertain. These results demonstrate that Tik Tok is a cultural repository and a disputed space, so empowerment and marginalization exist in parallel.

Discussion

The results of the research within the contexts of available literature and theoretical backgrounds. The findings showed that rural TikTok influencers in Pakistan rely on the platform to enable cultural expression and social negotiation as well as experiment with the economy. Nevertheless, they are also subjected to stigma, mockery and structural constraints via the same platform. In this way, TikTok comes out as a hybrid reality: it gives power and limits it at the same time, maintaining the identities of the rural world and exposing it to dispute. The discussion is structured according to the major themes found in the inductive analysis and formulated according to the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1974) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978).

Linking Findings with Previous Research

Cultural Pride and Folk Expression

The results showed that the rural influencers place a lot of reliance on folk songs, oral traditions and regional dialects as identifying marks. This is in line with the studies that place social media as a cultural repository where the voices of the marginalized keep local traditions alive (Qammar, 2021; Rahman, 2018). In the prism of UGT, these performances suggest that users in rural areas use Tik Tok to satisfy their personal desire to express themselves and be noticed. SIT is also applicable in this case: the rural young people are focused on belonging to the group by singing, rituals, and activities that reinforce the identity of groups.

However, the bad things cannot be neglected. Although the rural population enjoyed the cultural performances, the city population tended to ridicule them as being backward or low-class. This is reminiscent of previous research that indicates that digital platforms can both enhance the visibility of the rural but strengthen urban-rural hierarchies (Ahmed and Shah, 2024). In such a way, the

cultural pride is not only confirmed but also mocked, which suggests that the issue of rural representation is disputed.

Patriotic and Religious Symbolism

The appeal to Quranic verses, Islamic phrases, and nationalistic slogans indicates that the influencers have been trying to gain moral authority. This observation is consistent with that of Khan and Batool (2024), who assert that cultural codes are particularly important to rural women in order to render their presence in the online realm acceptable. This is an indication that media use satisfies the social acceptance and legitimacy needs according to the UGT perspective. SIT is applicable as well: those who have influences position themselves within the national and religious group identities which will make them not appear as outsiders.

There was some negative perceptions, however. Other critics told influencers of capitalizing on religion to gain attention, so that digital religiosity can be seen as a performance (Shah, 2019). This is indicative of the greater vagueness of the concept of visibility since, on the one hand, religious symbols offer defense against stigmatization; on the other, they may be subjected to criticism as hypocritical.

Redefining Gender Roles

Humor and role reversals in defining gender roles was one of the most evocative results. Male influencers dressed as women and impersonated women, and female influencers sometimes pictured themselves outside of gender-conventional domestic situations. These performances substantiate the claim of Butler (1990) that the gender identity is performative and negotiated. They are also consistent with Kumar (2023), who discovered that Indian users of Tik Tok on rural areas employ humor and exaggeration to challenge strict gender stereotypes.

As a theoretical point, SIT assists in the explanation of this as a form of identity negotiation within social groups, and UGT adds that the creators receive entertainment and recognition out of such performances. However, the bad part was that it was not weaker as well: such videos were usually labeled as immoral or shameless. This substantiates Shahzad (2024), who also noted that, in Pakistan, female influencers are moral policed even with modest content. Therefore, on the one hand, the digital platform serves as a means to experiment, but, on the other hand, creators can face gendered backlash, which is what Tik Tok demonstrates.

Disability and Resilience

The appearance of disabled influencers redefined disability as a sign of weakness to an image of strength. Through dancing, selling, and folk performance, disabled artists contested the culture. Such results resonate with Ali and Javid (2020) who stated that digital performativity allows marginalized groups to bargain with agency and power.

UGT assists us in understanding why this content is so addictive to watch: viewers satisfy their inspirational and entertainment requirements with such performances. SIT is also applicable because disabled influencers will be recognized because group identities are asserted as active participants of a cultural activity. But the negative one consisted of mockery and insults. This goes in line with Livingstone (2016), who pointed out that the online presence puts the susceptible population at risk. Therefore, even though Tik Tok gives disabled influencers more power, it also exposes them to internet-based prejudices.

Migration Aspirations

One of the themes that were repeated was the dream of migration and social promotion. Some of the most common influencers were house construction, employment overseas, or getting out of poverty in the country. These stories are consistent with Gardner (2020), who discovered that migration is perceived by the rural youth in South Asia as a way of achieving dignity and economic empowerment. This, according to UGT is a desire projection, as influencers express desire through the use of TikTok where other forms of desire would be suppressed in real life.

Simultaneously, these migration stories bring out inequalities in structures. The poverty, leaking domes, and absence of local opportunities are repetitively described, which highlights the systemic restriction to mobility. This shows that Tik Tok is ambivalent, as much as it offers a platform where people can express their dreams, it also exposes how rural lives are precarious.

Social Stigma and Moral Policing

The most powerful negative theme was stigma among the female influencers in particular. Even simple videos were charged with indecency or immorality. This observation aligns with the claims of Shahzad (2024) who believed that rural women are disproportionately moral-policed over the internet. In terms of SIT, this exposes that the belonging to a group is contingent and weak; women are not permitted to be seen outside of strictly regulated cultural parameters.

Nevertheless, other influencers reacted resiliently, by use of humor or satire to criticize them. This shows the point made by Baym (2015), who notes that there is a tendency of digital performances to combine playfulness with social critique. Therefore, stigma simply silences the influencers but compels them to negotiate the visibility in a creative manner.

Economic Mobility and Informal Advertising

Tik Tok was also used as a micro -entrepreneurship. The influencers were advocating cafes, crafts and farming and this proves the point made by Abidin (2018) that micro-celebrity opens up livelihoods. This finding is supported by UGT which demonstrates that influencers satisfy economic recognition needs.

However, there were poor economic results. The absence of brand collaborations, the lack of digital literacy, and structural disconnect did not allow engaging in meaningful monetization. It is evidenced by JSSH (2025), who discovered that rural creators in Pakistan have large structural obstacles to the activity of the digital economy. Therefore, Tik Tok was symbolically a sense of opportunity but not long-term revenue.

Theoretical Implications

The present study used Uses and Gratifications Theory, (UGT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) as a foundation of the findings.

- UGT had been heavily backed, as regards entertainment, self-expression, recognition, and projection of aspirations. Nevertheless, it was not sufficient in the negative experiences like stigma and harassment. This implies that UGT should be lengthened to consider digital participation unintended effects.
- SIT described the role of negotiating group identities by the influencers on the basis of culture, religion, gender, and disability. However, it turned out that such identities are disputed and unstable, and frequently ridiculed and policed. It means that SIT must be put into perspective in terms of conservative societies and the power relations.

- Generally, the given study adds to the theory as it demonstrates that although UGT and SIT are useful in explaining positive aspects, they do not fully explain the ambivalence of rural digital visibility.

Practical Implications

- Digital Inclusion: TikTok has proven to be culturally preservation and youth empowering, but policymakers should offer digital literacy courses to enable the rural influencers to overcome the stigma and safely monetize their content.
- Gender Empowerment: To overcome moral policing, female creators need specific protections, including harassment reporting instruments and awareness-raising, etc.
- Cultural Preservation Folk songs, oral traditions, and agricultural methods recorded on TikTok may become part of cultural heritage efforts.
- Economic Development: Bespoke Economic partnerships with local businesses and NGOs may boost economic activities beyond the small-scale promotions.

Conclusion

The study discusses the TikTok as a two-sided platform to rural influencers in Pakistan. On the one hand, it is a cultural repository, identity test laboratory and micro-economic space. On the other, it subjects the influencers to stigma, ridicule, and structural inequalities. The results confirm UGT and SIT in a more limited way but also expand them by proving the role of cultural stigma and moral policing in assisting to mediate the nature of gratification and identity formation in conservative societies.

Finally, rural TikTok influencers will be the embodiment of resilience as well as vulnerability: they keep the traditions, yet bend the rules, and share their dreams but are restrained by poverty, stigma, and being online. The paper thus highlights the essence of studying digital participation as a place of empowerment and a platform where culture, identity and economy converge in complicated dynamism.

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