

## **A study of how rural people are using digital channels**

### **A. Abstract**

With up to 300 million Indian customers estimated to be online by 2020, the rapid rise in internet usage in rural India is a double-barrelled game-changer. While most of the attention has been focused on urban consumers to date, rural areas—home to two-thirds of the country's population, or 870 million people—will see a lot of action throughout the rest of the decade. Rural communities will account for more than half of all new internet users, and rural consumers will account for almost half of all internet users in India by 2022. Rural penetration and usage will be driven by cheaper mobile handsets, the extension of wireless data networks, and changing consumer behaviours and tastes. They will both alter how rural consumers connect with businesses and provide businesses with a plethora of new ways to engage with rural customers. Our observations and conclusions are based on surveys of 300 rural customers done by me in six states, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, and Odisha.

Keywords:

### **B. Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to determine the amount of utilization of various digital channels, such as the firm's website, social media, and mobile application, among rural consumer, as well as the steps that the company should take to engage those customers with the available channels better. Many customers use different channels for their banking transactions based on their availability, accessibility, and convenience based their locations. Whether different customers use different sets of channels or the same set of channels based on their preferences. In the rural area, a study was conducted on the use of various channels by respondents with various occupational and professional characteristics. A total of 300 rural consumers who live in these areas were chosen as the study's sample. Farmer, agricultural labour, employees, and housewife's with a smartphone and a range of income levels are among the participants.

### **C. Research methodology**

A descriptive research approach has been proposed to investigate the consumption patterns of various digital channels. It describes the extent to which rural consumers use various digital channels such as websites, social media, and mobile apps. In this study, a structured questionnaire is used to investigate the channel usage patterns of various consumers. The questionnaire was administered using a stratified random sample method based on whether or not consumers in different localities own a mobile phone. A total of 300 samples were taken through a telephonic survey at random throughout India, including rural consumers.

### **D. Data Analysis**

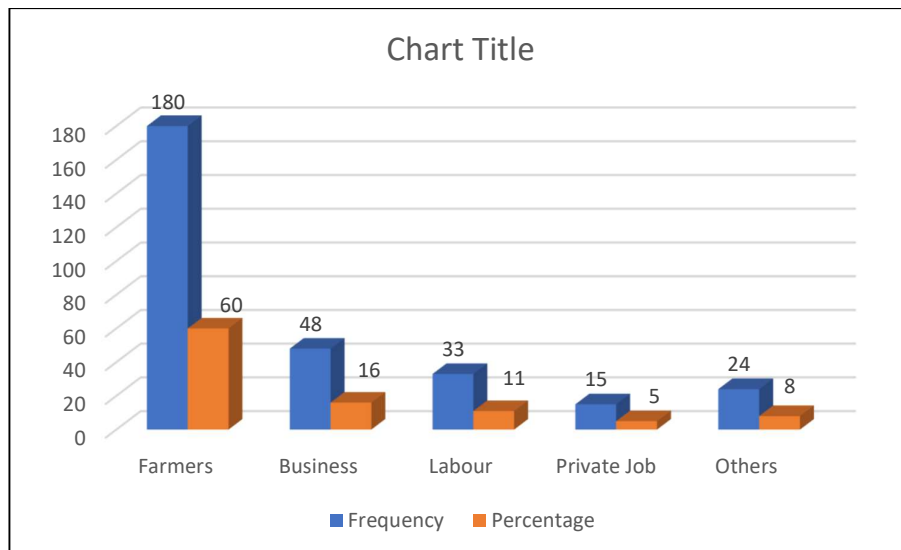
**Table-1: Age group of respondents**

SI No.	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	16 to 24 yrs	22	7.33333333
2	25 to 34 yrs	67	22.33333333
3	35 to 44 yrs	174	58
4	45 to 54 yrs	37	12.33333333
5	55 to 64 yrs	0	0
6	More than 65 yrs	0	0
	Total	300	100

Out of 300 respondents, 22 respondents i.e., 7.4 percent belongs to the age group of '16 to 24 years', followed by 67 respondents i.e., 22.3 percent belongs to the age group of '25 to 34 years', followed by 174 respondents i.e., 58 percent belongs to the age group of '35 to 44 years' and finally the remaining 37 respondents i.e., 12.4 percent belongs to the age group of '45 to 54 years'.

From the above, it can be inferred that majority of respondents belong to the age group of '24 to 44 years.

**Graph 1: Occupation of respondents**



Regarding occupation of the respondents, out of 300 respondents, 180 respondents i.e., 60 percent are having farming as their occupation, followed by 48 respondents i.e., 16 percent have business as their occupation, followed by 33 respondents i.e., 11 percent have labour as their occupation, followed by 15 respondents i.e., 5 percent are having private job as their occupation and finally the remaining 24 people i.e., 8 respondents are students and house wife's.

From the above data, we can conclude that a major occupational source for people living in rural areas in India is still farming.

**Table 2: Number of respondents possessing smartphones**

Sl No.	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	246	82
2	No	54	18
	Total	300	100

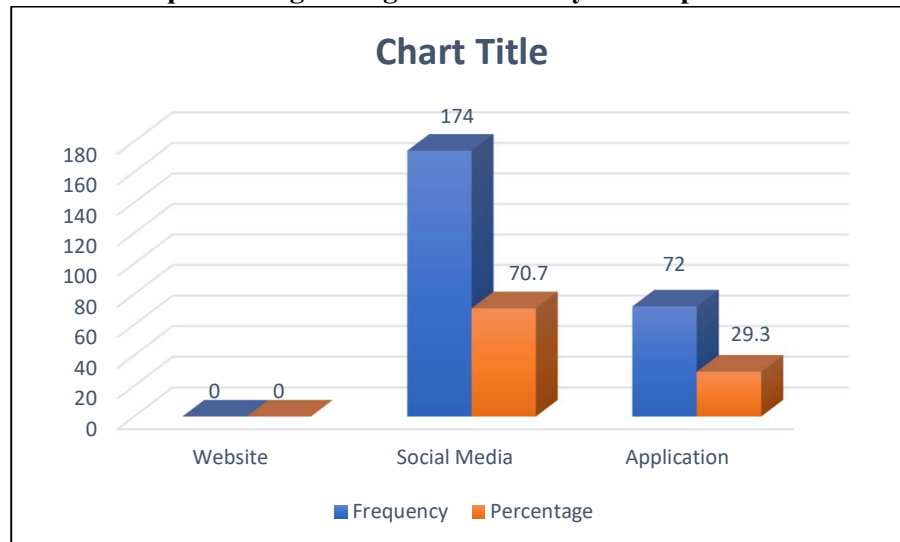
Regarding possession of smartphone, out of 300 respondents, 246 respondents i.e., 82 percent are having the smartphone and the remaining 54 respondents i.e., 18 percent do not have any smartphone with them.

**Table 3: Number of respondents using digital channels**

Sl No.	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	246	100
2	No	0	0
	Total	246	100

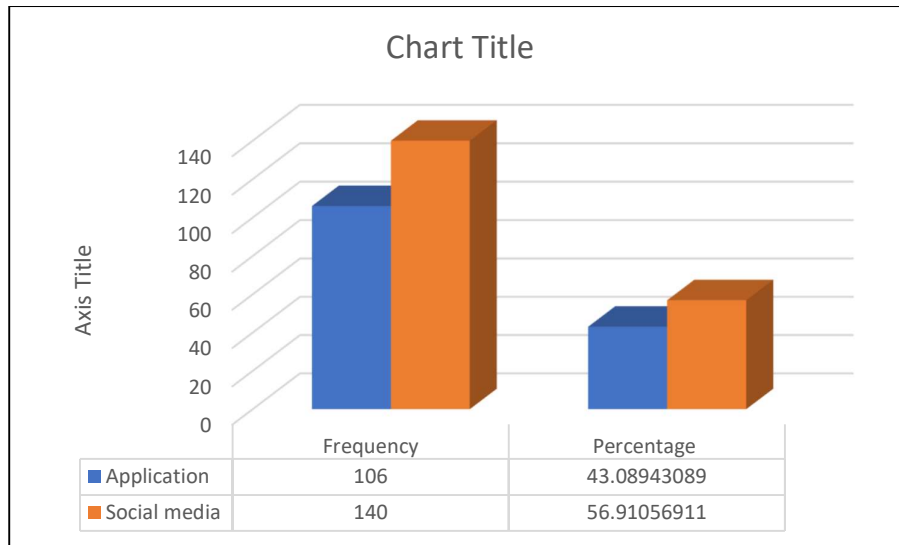
Regarding use of internet by the respondents, out of 246 respondents, all the respondents i.e., 100 percent use the digital channels.

**Graph 2: Usage of digital channel by the respondents**



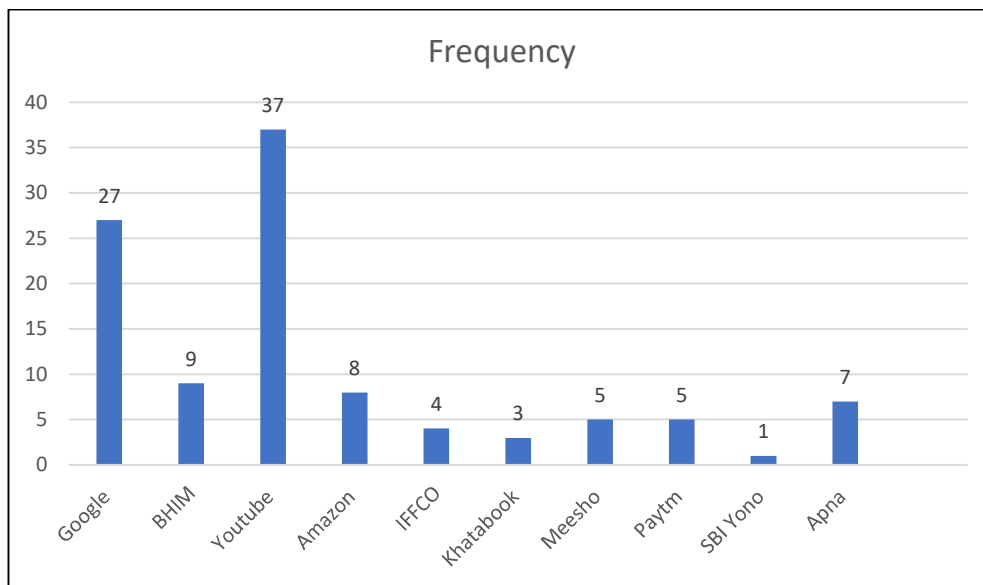
Regarding digital channel used, out of the 246 respondents, 174 respondents i.e., 70.7 percent are using social media and the remaining 72 respondents i.e., 29.3 percent uses application. Almost 71 percent respondents access the social media, which is the most popular online destination. But while urban users focus on the social aspect, interacting with friends on sites such as Facebook, people in rural areas use social networks to access the Internet, which is where their consumption of content—such as news and videos—primarily occurs. Other popular activities for rural consumers are downloading media, searching for information, and chatting and e-mailing.

**Graph 3: Which digital channel is more beneficial for the respondents**



Among 246 participants who were using the smartphone, 106 respondents i.e., 43.08 percent thinks that using Mobile Apps are more beneficial for them and the remaining 140 respondents i.e., 56.91 percent thinks that social media is more beneficial for them.

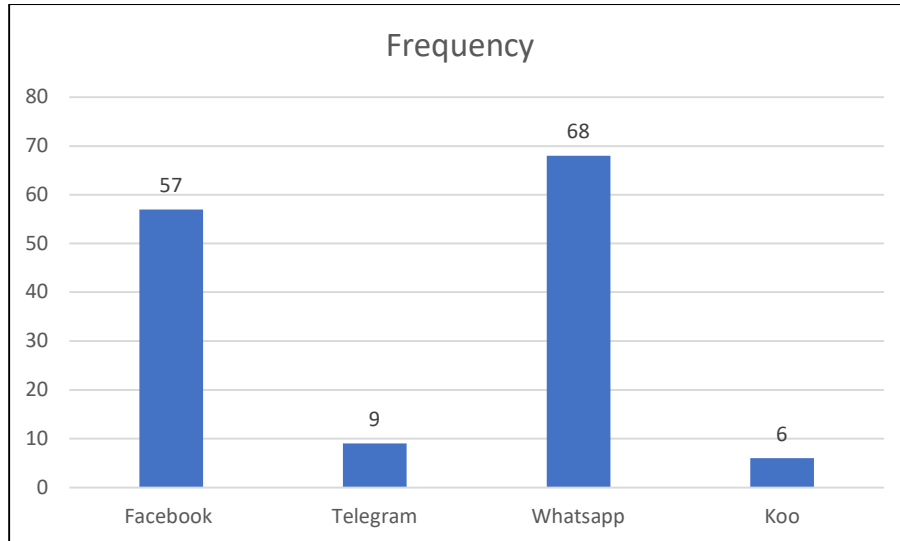
**Graph 4: Which application is more beneficial**



106 respondents think that using Mobile Application is more beneficial for them. The above graph shows the name of the application that respondents in rural area thinks are beneficial for them. It can be clearly inferred that smartphone users in rural areas think that Google and Youtube are the most beneficial apps for them because they are getting to learn new things from there. While after the pandemic more people started using apps like BHIM, Amazon, and Paytm because they don't have to go outside in order to do small payments and to order

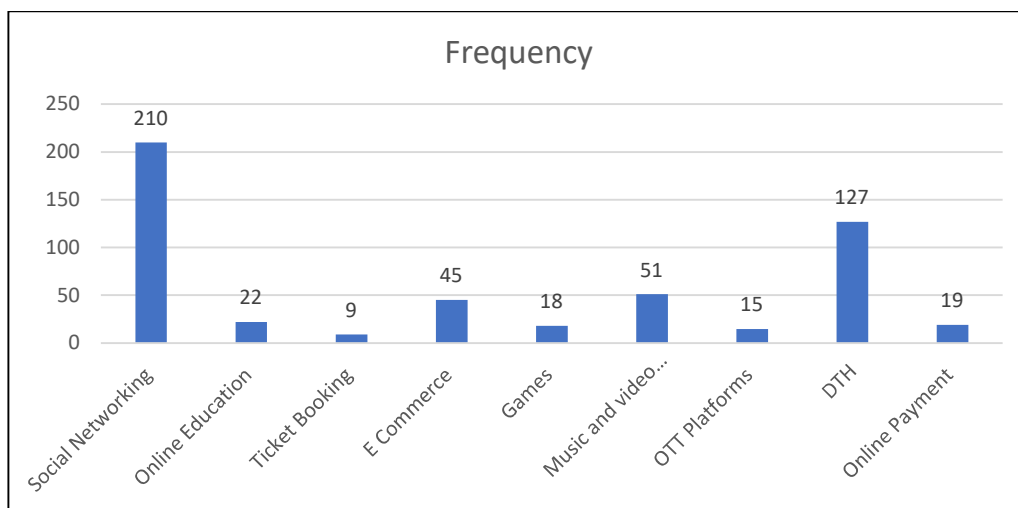
something. Respondents were happy with mobile apps like Meesho and Apna which are providing job opportunities to people.

**Graph 5: Which social media is more beneficial**



140 respondents think that using social media in their smartphones are more beneficial for them. 57 respondents choose Facebook as the most beneficial social media, followed by Telegram with 9 respondents, followed by 68 respondents with Whatsapp, and the remaining 6 respondents think that Koo is more beneficial. Whatsapp and Facebook are the most used social media channels in the rural area. Downloading media and connecting with people were the reasons why the respondents were mainly using these channels.

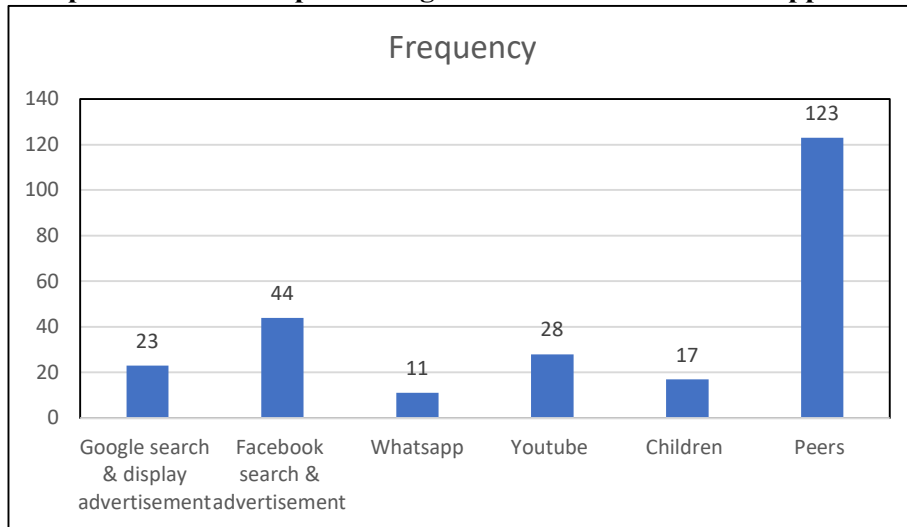
**Graph 6: Purpose of use of digital channel**



Regarding the purpose of use of digital channels, the respondents could choose a number of multiple options. Out of the 256 respondents almost all of them use social networking. With

127 people using DTH, television still remains one of the best ways to connect with rural consumers. 45 respondents are using E Commerce, a few respondents said they currently started using E Commerce due to the lockdown helped them a lot. 19 respondents were using the Online Payments Application in their mobile phone, which has helped them do the money transfer and transactions from their home, and thus now they have to go to the bank less frequently. With low-budget smartphones and low price data packs, people in rural areas now have more than 1 smartphone in their homes. The family members are engaged in talking with neighbors, watching television, and using smartphones as a source of entertainment.

**Graph 6: How the respondents get to know about a mobile application**



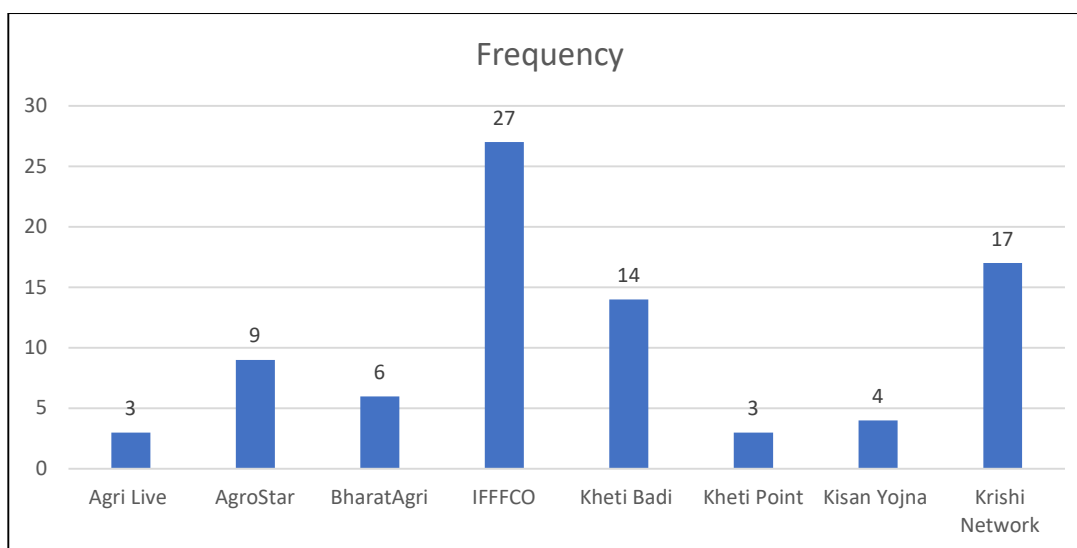
Out of 256 respondents, 80 respondents got to know about an mobile application from their peers, followed by 28 respondents got to know from Facebook Advertisements, followed by 17 respondents got to know from Youtube videos and Advertisements, followed by 15 respondents got to know from Google Advertisement, followed by 8 respondents who got to know from their children's, and the remaining 5 respondents who got to know from using Whatsapp.

**Table 5: Respondents using agricultural related mobile application**

Sl No.	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	No	120	59.11
2	Yes	83	40.88
	Total	203	100

Out of the 203 respondents who answered this question, 120 respondents i.e., 59.11 percent do not use agricultural related mobile application, and the remaining 83 respondents i.e., 40.88 percent uses agricultural related mobile application.

**Graph 7: Agricultural related mobile apps**



83 respondents use mobile applications related to agriculture. Out of the 83 respondents, the most commonly used agricultural mobile apps are IFFFCO, used by 27 respondents, followed by Krishi Network, used by 17 respondents, followed by Kheti Badi, used by 14 respondents, followed by AgroStar, used by 9 respondents, followed by BharatAgri, used by 6 respondents, followed by Kisan Yojna, used by 4 respondents, followed by Agri Live and Kheti Point, each used by 3 respondents.

**Table 6: Respondents refer to their peer groups to download mobile application**

Sl No.	Particular	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	160	65.0407
2	No	86	34.9593
	Total	246	100

Regarding respondents referring to their peer groups before downloading a mobile application, out of 246 respondents, 160 respondents, i.e., 65.04% of respondents refer to their peer group before downloading a mobile application, and the remaining 86 respondents, i.e., 34.9% of respondents do not refer to their peer group before downloading a mobile application.

### **E. Conclusion**

Rural market - one side remaining a virgin market for many producers has a prospective possibility for numerous newcomers. On the other side, marketers are ready to use digital marketing tactics in rural markets. The current analysis reveals such prospects for marketers to capitalize on the rural market's untapped potential. However, while this study focuses on the rural market as a whole, more research can be done in specific product or service groups to determine the potential of digital marketing in these places.

India's rural Internet usage is increasing. As people achieve digital maturity, more people will come online, and current users will spend more time online and engage in more activities. In

rural areas, online commerce is still in its infancy, although it is rapidly growing. Digital has already had a huge impact on purchasing decisions. All of these elements must be considered by India's marketers as they plan for a large and rising rural digital marketplace.

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