PAKISTAN JOURNAL OF MEDIA SCIENCES

P-ISSN: *2709-5401*, E-ISSN: *2709-5401*

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https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2614-0711

Use of Social Media Among Farmers: Uses and Gratification Approach

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Received:01-4-2025, **Accepted:**10-5-2025 **Available online: Published:** 30-06-2025

Cite this article: *Ahmad, B. Wahid, F. & Shafqat, H. (2025). Use of Social Media Among Farmers: Uses and Gratification Approach . Pakistan Journal of Media Science (PJMS), 6(1),*

This qualitative study examines how farmers in rural Pakistan utilize social media platforms, specifically YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to fulfil their agricultural and informational needs. Guided by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the research investigates the motivations behind farmers' digital media use, the types of content they engage with, and the perceived benefits and challenges of these platforms in their daily farming practices. Using semi-structured interviews with (n=17) farmers from Jand Tehsil in Punjab, the study identifies seven key themes: information seeking, professional development and problem-solving, social interaction and peer engagement, entertainment and stress relief, credibility assessment, weather forecasting, and adoption of new agricultural technologies. These themes align with UGT's cognitive, instrumental, social, affective, evaluative, surveillance, and innovative gratifications. Findings reveal that farmers are not passive consumers but strategic and active users of social media. They use digital platforms to solve problems, share experiences, verify information, and make informed agricultural decisions. While social media serves as a crucial source of knowledge and an emotional outlet, trust and misinformation remain significant concerns. The study contributes to the growing field of digital agriculture by highlighting the lived experiences of rural users. It offers practical insights for policymakers, agri-tech developers, and extension services aiming to design more localized, inclusive, and effective digital interventions for smallholder farmers.

Keywords*: Social Media, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Digital Agriculture, Rural Pakistan, Farmers, Agricultural Communication*

Introduction

Agriculture is an integral part of the Pakistani economy and rural life. However, the field is plagued by persistent issues, most prominent of which are outdated production techniques, inadequate extension services, limited access to market information, and climatic unpredictability. Usually, farmers used to base their guidance on field assistants, and informal networks and arrangements were fragmented and inferior. This is changing with the widespread adoption of mobile internet and the increasing use of smartphones.

In early 2025, there were approximately 190 million active cellular mobile connections in Pakistan, representing 75.2 Percent of the total population, enabling engagement with social media-based services such as YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok on a national scale, including in rural areas. Farmers who were previously cut off from contemporary agrarian knowledge are now playing an interactive role in digital ecosystems, where knowledge can be shared in real-time and they can engage in peer-to-peer relationships (Kemp, 2025).

Social media has significant advantages for farmers, as they can access up-to-date recommendations on how to control pests, irrigate, select seeds, use fertilisers, and be aware of local market prices (Ullah et al., 2020). The trend is associated with a wider behavioural change, where those most directly affected, the farmers, are no longer mere recipients of information (neither seeking nor receiving any targeted and valuable information in government-led communication), but active and informed seekers of relevant information. Similar trends have been monitored by scholars such as Aker (2021) and Mwalupaso et al. (2021) in Africa and South Asia. In contrast, Ahmad et al. (2023) note that Pakistani farmers utilise digital platforms to bypass bureaucratic obstacles and directly connect with fellow professionals and experts.

This study uses Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT; Katz et al., 1973; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000) to analyze the applications of agricultural actors living in rural Pakistan in utilizing social media to fulfil cognitive, social integrative, affective and personal integrative gratifications. UGT is particularly efficient in explaining the active choice and evaluation of content by users in the digital spaces. The platforms used in the study scenario, namely YouTube and TikTok, are more convenient due to their visual and aural formats, which allow low-literate viewers to gain access to modern farming knowledge.

However, increasing the use of these platforms subjects users to misinformation and unauthenticated information, as well as business favouritism. The emergence of digital literacy skills, therefore, becomes essential because farmers are getting exposed to the role of content evaluators. In the research, thematic analysis and qualitative interviews will be employed to investigate the role of farmers in Jand, Punjab, in utilising social media for agricultural purposes.

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The results demonstrate the variety of needs satisfied by the use of such platforms, as well as the methodologies employed to assess the reliability of the content, and a harmony between the observed behaviour and the expressed motivation in UGT. Comprehensively, the paper questions the convergence of rural farming and the digital revolution, which brings about a shift in institutional dependency to digital independence. In this case, technologies supported by mobile devices help to increase productivity, problem-solving and community connectivity. These lessons are crucial towards policymaking and designing tools that will lead to sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing integration of technology into farming practices worldwide, many Pakistani farmers still rely on informal or traditional knowledge systems. At the same time, rapid growth in mobile connectivity has brought social media into even remote agricultural communities. Yet, there is a lack of a structured understanding of how and why farmers use these platforms. Are they using social media to gain practical knowledge, solve farming problems, or merely for entertainment? How much do they trust the information they receive? This study aims to explore these questions and provide actionable insights into the evolving role of social media in contemporary farming practices.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do farmers in Punjab use social media for agricultural knowledge and information?

RQ2: What types of gratifications (e.g., cognitive, social, instrumental) do farmers obtain from social media use?

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the patterns and purposes of social media use among farmers in Punjab.
- To identify the gratifications that farmers seek and receive from social media platforms in the context of agricultural practices.

Significance of the Study

This research is timely and significant for several reasons. First, it provides localised insights into the digital behaviours of farmers in Pakistan, a demographic often underrepresented in media research. Second, by applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the study offers a robust theoretical foundation for understanding why farmers choose specific digital platforms and how they benefit from them. Third, the findings can inform agricultural extension programs, policymakers, and technology developers in designing more effective, accessible, and trustworthy digital interventions. Ultimately, the study contributes to the broader goal of enhancing agricultural productivity, sustainability, and digital inclusion in rural Pakistan. By focusing on the experiences of real farmers from Punjab, the study presents a grounded and practical portrayal of how social media is transforming knowledge exchange in agriculture. It reflects not only technological change but also cultural adaptation, as traditional farming communities embrace new tools to meet age-old challenges.

Literature Review

The information-seeking behavior of farmers is critical in agricultural development, yet it remains underexplored in terms of influencing factors. Babu et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of understanding farmers' information needs and search behaviour, noting that such assessments should guide the development of information programs tailored to local contexts. Khan et al. (2023) along with Islam and Ullah (2021), argue that contextually relevant content is essential for effective communication with rural populations. Stiglitz (2000) highlighted the limited understanding of how communities, such as farmer groups, absorb, adapt to, and utilise new information. He stressed the significance of organizational structures in shaping the flow and utility of information.

Rehman (2010) emphasized that information generated by agricultural researchers must be presented in formats aligned with farmers' practical needs. Similarly, FAO (2004) and IFPRI (2004) concluded that the future of food security in developing nations is more dependent on timely and accurate information than on agricultural inputs alone.

Professional Development and Problem Solving

In the context of professional growth and on-the-go problem-solving, rural farmers are increasingly relying on digital tools. The slow pace of internet infrastructure development in UK rural areas has historically hampered access to digital platforms (Philip et al., 2017). However, advancements like smartphones, broadband, and mobile internet (3G/4G) have enabled farmers to access valuable digital resources. Farmers now use web forums, digital farming magazines (Garner, 2023), and search engines to enhance their agricultural knowledge, resolve queries, and stay updated. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google Groups have revolutionised communication by enabling real-time interaction between farmers across geographical boundaries.

Burbi and Hartless Rose (2016) noted that farmers generally prefer kinaesthetic or audio/visual learning styles. Modern technology supports these preferences through videos, live webcasts, and audio recordings, allowing farmers to enhance their knowledge without leaving their farms.

Social Interaction and Community Engagement

Social media functions as a powerful medium for social interaction and community engagement. Kotis et al. (2020) described social media as interactive platforms enabling users to co-create and share media-rich content. These online communities (OCs) comprise individuals with shared interests who may not necessarily know each other personally but form weak-tie. Kim et al. (2025) further defined social network sites

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as platforms that facilitate the creation of profiles, the articulation of connections, and interaction among users.

Farmers are not isolated; they are embedded in dynamic social and environmental systems. According to Kelly (1955) and Bannister and Fransella (1971), farmers construct their realities through active participation in support networks. Shadbolt et al. (2013) emphasized that such engagement enhances farm resilience through strategies like buffer capacity (strengthening current systems), adaptive capacity (minor adjustments), and transformability (radical system changes).

Entertainment and Time Pass

Social media serves as a recreational and entertainment resort for modern farmers. Due to their nature, which is relaxing the mind, resources like Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, etc. provide relief to the physically rigorous agricultural lifestyles they are used in. Chaudhary and Yadav (2021) showed that the majority of the rural Indian respondents mentioned using these sites to receive jokes, music, and local programmes, thus making stress relief a factor.

Similar patterns were reported by Kumar and Singh (2018) based on the study of farmers in Punjab, who could retrieve songs and videos during their idle time. Such a concept as time pass or informal, unformalized use of social media is therefore critical. According to Saeed and Ullah (2021), living in rural areas (considering the farming population), youth often used digital media to entertain and relieve boredom. Patil and Deshmukh (2019) elucidated that people typically spend their time reading short videos, memes, or humorous news stories, further strengthening the use of social media in rural recreation.

Trust and Credibility of Information

Credibility and the aspect of trust are key variables in the process of adoption and use of social media information by farmers. Based on empirical evidence, it can be said that users generally accept platforms that are under the surveillance of reputable stakeholders, such as agricultural officers and experienced farmers. According to the evidence provided by Meena et al. (2019), Facebook and WhatsApp groups led by professionals are rated as more trustworthy.

Equally, Chandran and Ravindran (2020) found that YouTube channels managed by local agronomists were given a superior rate of trust as compared to avenues that transmitted it anonymously. Using Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the work by Reddy et al. (2021) unveiled that reliable information emerged as one of the key drivers of social media usage in farmers. The combination of peer-to-peer recommendations, visual support, and interactivity (in the form of likes and comments) helped build a perception of increased credibility.

Weather and Environmental Updates

Effective agricultural planning cannot be achieved without having updated knowledge of the weather and certain environmental variables. Social media has become a primary process through which real-time information is shared. Mishra et al. (2020) found that farmers in Odisha, one of the states in India, utilised Telegram and YouTube to access weather information and plan key activities, such as irrigation and spraying. Patra and Singh (2018) also reported the widespread use of WhatsApp in receiving weather-related alerts due to their temporal urgency. Ali and Kumar (2022) also emphasized that social media groups using interactive communications increase the data-interpretation process and, thus, improve the quality of decisions. Overall, these media provide both informational and social resources, thereby supporting their role in modern farming practices.

Theoretical Framework

The research undertaking adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), as formulated by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974, to clarify the patterns, motives, and utilities related to the application of social media in obtaining "important" agricultural knowledge and information by farmers. UGT is a user-centred model that puts the reasons and processes by which people actively spend time browsing certain media at the forefront, in response to their various needs and desires. The gist behind this school of thought is the idea that media users are directed and willful, which means that they intentionally use a particular medium to meet a specific gratification, such as entertainment, socialisation, information acquisition, and establishing a personality identity.

According to UGT, media use is driven by the following core gratifications:

- **Cognitive Needs**: for acquiring knowledge, information, and understanding.
- **Affective Needs**: for emotional satisfaction or aesthetic enjoyment.
- **Personal Integrative Needs**: for self-confidence, status, and credibility.
- **Social Integrative Needs**: for interaction and relationship-building.
- **Tension Release Needs**: for relaxation and escape.

This theory provides a robust framework for examining how media use fulfils individual goals and how different types of media content serve different user motivations.

Application of UGT in the Context of Farmers' Social Media Use

In the context of this study, UGT provides a valuable lens for exploring how farmers in Pakistan utilise social media platforms for various agricultural and informational purposes. Rather than being passive consumers, farmers are viewed as active participants who selectively engage with digital content tailored to their unique socioeconomic needs and environmental challenges. Applying UGT to this study helps analyze what kind of gratifications farmers seek from social media and how

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these platforms fulfil their needs. Specifically, farmers use social media to:

a. Gain Agricultural Knowledge (Cognitive Gratification)
Farmers frequently access social media to obtain up-to-date information related to:

- Modern farming techniques
- Weather forecasts
- Pest control measures
- Crop rotation and irrigation methods
- Government agricultural schemes and subsidies

This demonstrates the role of social media in addressing their information-seeking and learning needs, making UGT particularly relevant for understanding the cognitive dimension of their usage.

b. Build Social Networks (Social Integrative Gratification)
Farmers use social media to connect with fellow farmers, participate in online agricultural groups and forums, and communicate with suppliers, agricultural experts, and potential buyers. These interactions help establish a supportive network, share experiences, and find solutions to farming problems. Social media thus serves as a platform for social integration, where virtual communities contribute to real-world agricultural decisions and practices.

c. Share Personal Achievements (Personal Gratification)
By sharing pictures of their farms, crops, or agricultural innovations, farmers also satisfy personal identity and recognition needs. Showcasing their success enhances self-esteem and builds a sense of pride and accomplishment.

d. Access Practical Benefits (Instrumental Gratification)
Social media offers practical benefits, including marketing farm produce, learning about prices, and exploring new technologies. This instrumental use of social media further validates UGT's claim that media can fulfil practical and goal-oriented needs.

Relevance of UGT to the Study

UGT is particularly well-suited for this research because it shifts the focus from media effects to user motivations, aligning closely with the study's aim to explore how and why farmers use social media in their daily agricultural practices. It recognises the agency of farmers as media users, highlights their gratification-seeking behaviour, and allows the research to categorise and interpret diverse usage patterns.
By applying UGT, this study not only examines the content and platforms farmers prefer but also provides insight into the psychological, social, and economic gratifications they receive through digital engagement. This understanding is essential for policymakers, agricultural extension services, and development practitioners aiming to enhance digital literacy and design effective online interventions for rural communities.

Methodology

Research Design

The research study presented employs a qualitative research design, as semi-structured interviews will be conducted to investigate the extent to which farmers utilise social media to support their agricultural production activities. The following methodological decision was driven by the ability of qualitative inquiry to produce a nuanced understanding of participants' lived experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding social media use. The qualitative methods particularly relate to the difficulties of in-situ accountability of human behaviour (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Sampling and Approach Towards Participant Recruitment
The sample of the study comprises 17 participants, who were recruited through a purposive sampling technique a method commonly used in qualitative studies to recruit participants with specific knowledge and experience related to the research goals (Palinkas et al., 2015). The target group included experienced farmers in Punjab (Jand) (an area in Punjab province) who actively practice farming and use social media sites to improve their farming techniques and make informed decisions in their farming activities.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: a. Active involvement in farming activities. b. Familiarity with and regular use of social media platforms. c. Willingness to share experiences in either Urdu or Punjabi. d. Belonging to different age groups and backgrounds to ensure diversity. These farmers were selected due to their hands-on experience and their role in integrating digital tools into agricultural decision-making processes.

Data Collection Method

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection technique used in the study, based on a list of 12 open-ended questions. This method provided the researcher with freedom during interviews, but the respondents were treated consistently (Ullah & Jan, 2021). The interviews lasted 25-40 minutes each, depending on the availability and the depth of the answers obtained. Efforts were made to conduct interviews in a manner that made the participants feel comfortable and facilitated effective communication by using Urdu or Punjabi, the languages preferred by the participants. The interviews were conducted either aboard or via online video-conference systems and platforms, depending on the location and accessibility of the respondents. Face-to-face (for participants in accessible areas), through WhatsApp voice calls, or via mobile phone calls. This multi-modal approach ensured inclusivity and flexibility, particularly for participants in remote areas.
All interviews were conducted within one month (May 2025), ensuring timely and focused data collection. Interviews were audio-recorded (with participants' consent) and transcribed for thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the interviews, permission was sought from the participants, and informed consent was obtained. The study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of answers were clearly stated. The participants will be informed that their names will be kept anonymous in the final report unless they notify us otherwise. The ethical standards as prescribed in qualitative methodology (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001) were used in research to ensure

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that the dignity, privacy and rights of all parties were upheld during the procedure.

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was employed in the data analysis and is suitable for identifying, examining, and describing patterns (themes) in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews were transcribed and then re-read several times to establish recurring themes, phrases, and categories that conformed to Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The themes were narrowed to portray the motivations, behaviours, and consequences of using social media by farmers.

Thematic Analysis

This study examined the role of social media in the lives of Pakistani farmers through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT). The analysis identified seven major themes, each linked to specific gratification types, cognitive, instrumental, social, affective, surveillance, evaluative, and innovative.

Theme 1: Information Seeking

A prominent theme that emerged from the data was the widespread use of social media for acquiring agricultural information. Farmers consistently reported using platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp to gain knowledge about crop diseases, fertilizer application, seed varieties, and market price trends. These digital tools are increasingly serving as primary sources of agricultural knowledge, gradually replacing traditional channels such as television and word of mouth.

"I use it to gain new information." Farmer 3
"I watch videos related to agriculture." Farmer 17
"I use it to get information about different seed varieties for different seasons." Farmer 6
"I use it to know crop prices." Farmer 14
"Farmers use social media to learn new agricultural techniques." Farmer 6
"I use it to learn about sprays and disease control for crops." Farmer 16

Some participants reflected on the practical convenience of digital tools in comparison to outdated or limited access to physical extension services, Farmer 1 added that "Earlier I had to go to the city or wait for the TV news, but now I just search on YouTube when I face a problem in my wheat crop." Farmer 2 added more that "We follow a page on Facebook that posts daily rates of vegetables. It helps us plan when to sell." Farmer 2

These accounts align with the cognitive gratification aspect of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1973), which posits that users turn to media to satisfy their informational and learning needs. In the context of rural Pakistan, where formal agricultural advisory services may be scarce or inconsistent, social media emerges as an alternative, user-friendly tool for experiential and on-demand learning.

The findings of this study are consistent with earlier research. For instance, Ahmad et al. (2023) observed that Pakistani farmers are increasingly reliant on digital platforms for real-time decision-making in agricultural contexts. Aker (2021) and Aminu et al. (2022) identified similar patterns among African and South Asian smallholder farmers, where digital tools are transforming access to agricultural knowledge. Furthermore, Mwalupaso et al. (2021) emphasized that social media plays a vital role in spreading climate-smart farming practices and improving market linkages for rural communities.

Thus, social media usage for information-seeking is not merely a change in communication habits; it represents a paradigm shift in agricultural learning. Farmers are now more autonomous in how they seek out, evaluate, and implement knowledge, allowing them to respond more effectively to challenges and adopt modern innovations in a rapidly changing agricultural landscape.

Theme 2: Professional Development and Problem Solving

Farmers in the study frequently emphasized the role of social media as a practical tool for solving day-to-day agricultural problems. In the absence of regular access to agricultural officers, many turned to platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp to find timely and relevant solutions to farming challenges. The farmer 17 explained.

"When we saw bugs on our tomato plants, I searched Facebook and found a video from Multan explaining the right spray."

This illustrates what Rubin (2009) describes as instrumental gratification, where media is actively used to fulfil specific, goal-oriented tasks. In this context, social media becomes a digital extension tool, used not for leisure but for improving professional farming practices. Farmer 4 added more.

"We don't have access to field officers, so we use videos to solve farm problems."

This reflects a broader trend identified by Zhang et al. (2022), who noted that in developing contexts, farmers increasingly rely on online platforms for guidance due to gaps in traditional extension services. In line with this, Chhachhar and Hassan (2021) found that Pakistani farmers benefit from digital media by accessing updated farming knowledge, pesticide usage tutorials, and machine-handling tips, all without having to travel or depend on government officers. Farmer 9 further elaborated:

"I consult with experts and other farmers when I face an issue."

Such comments indicate that farmers do not use social media passively. Instead, they interact with content and communities to make better agricultural decisions, a behaviour aligned with the participatory nature of new media environments.

The significance of this theme lies in the empowerment it brings to rural users. As traditional knowledge channels become harder to access, especially in remote or underserved areas, farmers turn to digital spaces not only for knowledge acquisition but also for problem resolution and decision-making autonomy.

Ultimately, this theme reinforces that social media is not merely a tool for communication; it has become a central component of farmers' professional development strategies, enabling them to identify crop diseases, determine input quality, and evaluate solutions in real-time. The instrumental use of media, as supported by both the participants' experiences and prior

P-ISSN: *2709-5401*, E-ISSN: *2709-5401*

literature, highlights the transformative impact of digital technologies on rural agricultural practice.

Theme 3: Social Interaction and Community Engagement

One of the striking trends which can be observed in the dataset is the social and community-building role of social media among farmers. In addition to providing an information conduit, communication tools like WhatsApp and Facebook are widely used for interaction, knowledge sharing, and support among other farmers and experts in the agricultural field.

The common responses provided by the respondents were the ability to be involved in group chats and online forums, through which they could ask questions and receive immediate answers, such as 9/30-ish farmers in a WhatsApp group. Farmer 5 added that.

> *When anyone faces a problem, they share posts and pictures and receive instant advice. And Regional experts and farmers are participants of the WhatsApp group Crop Reform.*

This mutual act is a reflection of the integrative need that is postulated in the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, et. al., 1973), i.e., the need to feel a part of a collective interest group. The online communication of most farmers is no longer limited to resolving their problems, but has transcended to developing a sense of self-esteem and emotional connectivity among themselves. It feels good when my posts are commented upon. It creates confidence and a collective feeling." These results overlap with the findings of Ahmed and Sheikh (2021) stressing that peer-to-peer agricultural learning and psychological reinforcement are possible with the use of social media.

Moreover, Oloruntoba et al. (2023) note that online groups among farmers promote so-called learning communities, in which users can communicate and share information about farming, as well as receive emotional support and encouragement. The combined efforts of Facebook and WhatsApp in addressing this issue and facilitating community consensus through photo-sharing systems, commenting threads, and real-time discussions have also significantly altered the dynamics of collectively addressing rural community problems and decision-making. Farmers do not work anymore but work together: they share pictures of the crops, talk about weather threats, and find the way out collectively.

The virtual community involvement in Pakistan's rural sector has undergone significant development over the past couple of years. It is well-suited to complement established farming networks, overcoming a variety of traditional limitations, including geographical isolation and time delays.

These platforms have enabled collaboration through problem-solving and fostered social cohesion through synchronous communication. As more areas of digital connectivity reach rural fields, these tools have become an integral part of the communal identity of farmers, fostering confidence and a peer-to-peer learning system that has been enhanced through an interactive, participatory process.

Theme 4: Entertainment and Time-Passing

While farmers primarily used social media as a professional resource, many participants also highlighted its value as a source of entertainment and emotional relief. After long hours in the field, farmers described turning to platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram reels to unwind and distract themselves from the stresses of agricultural life.

"I mostly use it for entertainment and rarely for agriculture." Farmer 2
"I use it to check trending content." Farmer 9
"After a long day, I watch funny videos on TikTok to relax." Farmer 7

These responses reflect the affective gratification dimension in Uses and Gratifications Theory, where individuals seek media for emotional comfort, amusement, and mental refreshment (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Notably, farmers expressed that the entertainment content on social media helped them relieve stress, particularly through short-form videos and humorous clips. Farmer 7 added that.

> *"After a long day, I relax by watching funny videos or village comedy shows on TikTok, and sometimes, I just scroll reels, some are educational, some are just fun. It helps with stress."*

The dual use of media for both information and entertainment underscores the complexity of digital consumption among rural populations. This finding is consistent with those of Iqbal and Zulfiqar (2020), who reported that short-form video content has become widely popular among rural audiences in Pakistan for both leisure and educational purposes. Similarly, Chib et al. (2022) found that South Asian rural youth are increasingly engaging with "edutainment" content, which incorporates educational themes within entertaining formats.

This pattern of behaviour suggests that social media offers emotional reprieve and distraction in an otherwise labour-intensive lifestyle. Farmers are not only absorbing knowledge but also navigating moments of leisure through trending content and personalized feeds. The humour, music, and visual creativity found on these platforms provide psychological balance in environments often marked by economic pressure, weather uncertainty, and physical labour.

The effective use of social media among farmers highlights its role in meeting the emotional needs of rural users. While practical knowledge remains a primary driver, the desire to feel joy, unwind, and stay mentally refreshed makes entertainment a vital secondary function of digital engagement in Pakistan's farming communities.

Theme 5: Trust and Credibility of Information

Trust in social media content among residents of farm communities has become a significant area of concern. Despite the recognition of the desirability of convenience and universal access to agricultural information due to the Internet, the subjects took a vigilant stance and were openly supportive of the implementation of selective trust, thus demonstrating a high level of sensitivity to misinformation and the need to conduct a thorough review of the content. Farmer 10 highlighted that

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This is demonstrated in the following responses. I would estimate my confidence at 80%. I trust information 80% of the time, depending on the source. "Not much." I build trust by reading reviews from various sites before applying anything.

These evaluations ascertain Flanagin and Metzger's (2007) conceptualisation of evaluative media use, where users challenge the credibility of the information without assuming that they are right. This strategy is especially relevant in rural settings, where incorrect information can have dire consequences for agricultural output and family finances. To verify the authenticity of internet content, farmers resorted to an unofficial strategy of validation and cross-checking, as not all content on YouTube is accurate. Farmer 5 and 9 added that.

I tend to verify it with other farmers or pose a question using our WhatsApp group."

One of the videos is done to get likes. I believe in people who can demonstrate real results of their farms."

This trend presents an increasing degree of digital resiliency, which is defined by interpretive participation as opposed to passive consumption; after exposure to the content, users challenge, doubt, and confirm its validity. In line with these reports, Livingstone et al. (2021) insist that critical engagement is the only solution to the risk of digital misinformation. Similarly, Nasir and Qureshi (2022) document that peer consultation is the most popular verification tool among Pakistani farmers, and they often receive advice via WhatsApp groups or through personal contacts before adopting digital counselling.

Such results indicate that agricultural producers are not passive recipients of digital content; they are active, critical evaluators of information, basing their decisions on the perceived quality of the content, the credibility of the authors, and the persuasiveness of visual evidence. These are more evolved adaptive practices to the digital media and it indicates the degree to which cognitive as well as evaluative pleasures have come to dominate the way media is experienced by people living in rural settings.

The current paper, therefore, defines that trust in digital farming content is not an absolute and unmediated construct. Instead, it is relative and is dynamically constructed by personal experience, social discourse and impressions of the authenticity of sources. The resulting scepticism serves as a shield, and farmers can counter the risk by utilising the extensive knowledge provided by social media sites.

Theme 6: Weather Forecasting and Environmental Awareness

A key finding of this study was the increasing reliance of farmers on social media and digital tools for weather forecasting and environmental awareness. With changing climate patterns and unpredictable rainfall in Pakistan, farmers are increasingly using platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and weather-specific websites to receive timely updates that inform their crucial farming decisions.

"I rely on the Google site. Farmer 4
"I follow the 'Pakistan Weather Alert' YouTube channel." Farmer 6
"I follow the 'Weather Today' page on Facebook." Farmer 2

This behaviour aligns with the surveillance need outlined in Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973), the desire to stay informed about real-world developments that may impact personal or professional life. In agricultural settings, such needs are magnified, as weather-related decisions often determine the success or failure of an entire season. For instance, some farmers explained how they adjust their activities based on forecasted conditions. Farmer 11 pointed

"If rain is expected, I will delay pesticide spray. I follow the AccuWeather page and some YouTube channels for updates."

Farmer 12. Further added

"Weather updates help us protect the crop from storms and plan accordingly."

These insights reflect a growing dependence on digital weather alerts as a critical planning tool, particularly in the absence of localized meteorological services. Sharma and Yadav (2021) emphasized that rural communities are increasingly turning to mobile technologies for agricultural adaptation. Similarly, Singh and Kumar (2020) found that access to accurate and timely weather forecasts contributes significantly to minimizing crop losses and improving produce management.

Farmers commonly use weather-based web pages and mobile apps to support decision-making about the objectives of their operations. Such applications can not only give the idea of when to irrigate and harvest but also give the best time to apply pesticides, transport crops and assign labour. In this way, climate-related decisions are becoming more environmentally conscious and are becoming a key process in increasing productivity and making resources more efficient.

Such dependence on online platforms has also been noted as part of a broader climate-adaptation approach that has emerged at the grassroots level. Instead of relying on local, but not so reliable signals, as would have been the case traditionally, farmers are getting the opportunity to work with real-time climate intelligence. Overall, social media and online weather services have become essential tools for surveillance among agricultural producers. Their application highlights the process of translating digital literacy into climate resilience, which enables rural communities to adapt more efficiently to environmental uncertainty and sustain agrarian activities in the face of rapidly growing climate risks.

Theme 7: Awareness and Adoption of New Technology

One notable finding from the current analysis is the use of social media by farmers to detect, explore, and adapt to new agricultural technologies. The subjects of the research were

P-ISSN: *2709-5401*, E-ISSN: *2709-5401*

very positive about the latest methods, tools, and technologies from around the world, including new irrigation systems, biofertilizers, and machinery improvements, among others. Farmer 13 pointed that.

> *"I have seen a video in Turkey about drip irrigation. Now I would like to do something of that kind myself."*

Farmer 14 further added

> *"I used to have no idea about biofertilizers until I spotted them on Facebook. Their usage is now a regular occurrence with me."*

Such assertions exemplify the cognitive and creative satisfaction demonstrated by Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), where media involvement is driven by curiosity, a desire to grow, and a propensity to test new knowledge that arises (Katz et al., 1973).

Modern farmers are not mere recipients of the locally based norms; instead, they are active proponents of existing trends in the global agricultural world. This change indicates a loss of a local, centric perspective and its replacement with that of outcomes that include internationalised knowledge exchange, enabled through the borderless logic of electronic and digital platforms.

For farmers, digital literacy extends beyond just receiving information; it involves assessing the relevance of data, comparing different practices, and applying knowledge to local contexts for improvement. Consequently, adopting new technology marks a grassroots digital revolution in agriculture.

Farmers' use of social media also shows a multifaceted engagement with digital spaces, encompassing not only information sharing but also fostering innovation and stimulating cognitive processes. The modernisation of rural agricultural thinking underscores the vital role of innovation and knowledge transfer in today's agriculture.

Discussion and Conclusion

This qualitative study assessed how farmers in the Punjab province in Pakistan use social media to fulfil the purposes of agriculture, information and personal needs. As a conceptual design, the research identified seven major themes, each reflecting a unique motive for social-media use among farmers: cognitive, instrumental, social integrative, affective gratifications, evaluative, surveillance, and innovative gratifications.

It was observed that farmers rely heavily on YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp to obtain information about seed varieties, pesticide application schedules, weather forecasts, and current market price updates. These observations also support the cognitive dimension of UGT, which is based on the idea that media use is driven by the need to create knowledge. In line with the evidence presented by Ahmad et al. (2023) and Aker (2021), the participants in the current study exhibited active information-seeking behaviours, as they preferred social media sources over traditional extension services due to their accessibility and perceived topicality. Likewise, Mwalupaso et al. (2021) also highlighted the enabling effect of digital platforms to promote climate-smart agriculture.

Participants frequently described solving real-time farming problems by consulting online content, especially videos and peer discussions in digital forums. These findings echo Rubin's (2009) concept of goal-oriented media use. Scholars such as Zhang et al. (2022) and Chhachhar & Hassan (2021) have similarly emphasized how digital content helps fill gaps left by traditional agricultural services in South Asia.

The major issue addressed in the current research was the social interaction facilitated by WhatsApp groups, Facebook pages, and internet communities, with the assistance of farmers. This kind of interaction would have fulfilled the farmer's social needs that are of belonging, circulating of information, and learning as a group, hence falling in line with the social integrative aspect of the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). According to the literature, the findings reveal that the existence of online farming communities fosters collective problem-solving, informal mentorship, and emotional solidarity among its members.

Even though the primary reason that led most farmers to social media was their professional needs, the necessity to find emotional satisfaction on social media by watching entertaining videos, hearing some audio content, and scrolling through the most popular posts could hardly be ignored. This trend highlights the emotional aspect of UGT, as the media serves both an enjoyment and emotional release function (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). The dual functions of media as both a source of information and entertainment align with the findings of Iqbal and Zulfiqar (2020) and Chib et al. (2022), as illustrated in the case of South Asia.

The respondents were also critical of the content on social media, as they engaged in cross-referencing information and consultation with peers. Such practices indicate the evaluative aspect of media use, in which users gauge the authenticity of incoming content (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). They align with the findings reported in Livingstone et al. (2021) and Nasir and Qureshi (2022), which outline the increasing digital literacy and scepticism among rural media consumers.

Interaction with weather information acted as a highly motivated media content in the sample. Farmers resorted to the use of the accuweather application, YouTube channels and Facebook pages to help them calibrate the best measures in managing rainfall, irrigation programs and harvesting. This trend advocates the surveillance aspect of the Unified Gratification Theory (UGT) where the emphasis is on being on the current state of the outside world. According to Sharma and Yadav (2021) and Singh and Kumar (2020), consistent with observations in precision agriculture, digital weather services have become requisite in precision agriculture.

The fifth type is Innovative Gratification, which involves the adoption of new technologies. Farmers in the current research did not wait to be informed by outside researchers about emerging technologies; instead, they sought them out and tested them. They were not limited to domestic innovations and explored international innovations, such as drip irrigation systems and biofertilizers, which, following contextualization in the UGT, can be viewed as a form of cognitive or innovative gratification. This behaviourally reflects a change in thinking on the part of country dwellers toward city-based thinking, particularly in terms of industry-based farming.

P-ISSN: *2709-5401*, E-ISSN: *2709-5401*

The current study showed that Pakistani farmers are tactical flexible and critical users of digital media. Based on the conceptual framework of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), it turned out that social media is not the instrument of communication only; instead, it is a broad tool that became a part of everyday agricultural activities when regarding education, decision-making, interaction with peers, entertainment, verification of trust, environmental observation and accessibility of technological progress.

The results go a long way toward verifying the initial premise of UGT, namely, that media consumers are energetic actors who interact with media objects to satisfy specific psychological and practical demands. This kind of participation is significantly influential in the Pakistani farming context, which faces limitations in terms of infrastructure, literacy levels and institutionalised activities that require self-motivated involvement in the digital world.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Based on these findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed: Government agencies and agricultural departments should partner with digital media companies to develop verified agricultural content in local languages, customised for regional farming conditions. Training sessions and workshops should be organised at the village level, particularly for older farmers, to enhance their skills in evaluating and using digital tools effectively. Support and regulation of social media influencers with agricultural expertise are essential to ensure they share credible, field-tested information. Developing regional mobile apps with offline capabilities, weather updates, price alerts, and expert chat features can help bridge digital gaps. Platforms should be encouraged to flag or remove misleading agricultural content, while public awareness campaigns should focus on helping users identify false or commercially driven advice.

Limitations of the Study

This research, although insightful, is based on a small purposive sample (n = 17) and focuses on a specific geographic location (Jand, Punjab). Therefore, generalizability is limited. The gender aspect is also underrepresented, as most participants were male. The study focused solely on qualitative interviews, lacking complementary quantitative validation.

Future Research

A comparative study between farmers in different provinces (e.g., Punjab vs. Sindh) can reveal regional differences in digital behaviour. Further research should investigate the impact of gender, education level, and digital infrastructure on the adoption of social media in the agricultural sector. A longitudinal study could track how prolonged use of social media affects actual farming outcomes, productivity, or income levels. Studies could explore the psychological effects of digital farming communities, particularly in terms of stress relief and well-being among rural populations.

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