

Invisible Inequalities in Curated Feeds: Rural–Urban Differences in Social Media Content Diversity and User Visibility

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Abstract:

Social media platforms have become influential spaces for communication, cultural expression, news consumption, economic participation and identity formation. However, the information displayed on these platforms is not distributed neutrally. Algorithmically curated feeds select, rank and recommend content according to predicted relevance, engagement and commercial value. While such personalisation reduces information overload, it can also create invisible inequalities in the diversity of content encountered by users and the visibility granted to different creators. These inequalities may be particularly significant across rural and urban social locations.

This research article examines how residence influences social media content diversity and user visibility. It adopts a qualitative, review-based design and synthesises interdisciplinary literature on algorithmic curation, digital inequality, recommender systems, rural communication and platform visibility. The analysis is guided by digital-inequality theory, Bourdieu's concept of capital and the sociotechnical understanding of algorithms. The reviewed evidence indicates that rural and urban users do not participate in social media under equal conditions. Differences in connectivity, device quality, digital literacy, language, social networks, content-production resources and knowledge of platform conventions affect both what users see and whether their contributions become visible.

The thematic analysis identifies five interconnected findings. First, rural users may encounter narrower content pathways because platforms learn from constrained interaction histories and locally homogeneous networks. Second, content in dominant languages and urban cultural formats is more likely to fit established visibility signals. Third, rural creators face barriers related to infrastructure, production quality, network reach and monetisation. Fourth, engagement-based ranking can reinforce initial inequalities through cumulative feedback loops. Fifth, rural users are not merely passive victims; they develop collective, vernacular and culturally grounded strategies to negotiate platform visibility.

The article concludes that digital inclusion cannot be measured only by internet access or social media membership. It must also include exposure diversity, equitable creator visibility, linguistic representation and meaningful participation. The study recommends geographically disaggregated algorithmic audits, multilingual recommender design, transparent visibility indicators, rural creator support and public-interest diversity obligations for major platforms.

Keywords: algorithmic curation, curated feeds, rural–urban inequality, social media, content diversity, user visibility, digital divide, recommender systems.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have transformed the organisation of public communication. News, entertainment, political discussion, educational material, commercial advertising and personal interaction increasingly reach users through feeds assembled by automated ranking and recommendation systems. A social media feed is therefore not a simple chronological record of everything posted by a user's network. It is a selectively constructed environment in which some content is prioritised, some is repeatedly recommended and some remains largely unseen.

Algorithmic curation helps platforms manage an enormous volume of material. It predicts what users are most likely to view, like, share, comment upon or watch for an extended period. These predictions are usually based on previous behaviour, network connections, content characteristics and patterns observed among comparable users. The process appears personalised, but it is also shaped by platform objectives, including retention, engagement and advertising revenue.

The social consequences of curated feeds are important because visibility has become a valuable social resource. A visible post can generate recognition, employment, sales, political influence or community support. In contrast, persistent invisibility can limit participation even when a user technically has access to the platform. Social media inequality consequently involves more than being connected or disconnected. It includes differences in whose content is noticed, which cultures are represented, whose language is recognised and which users are introduced to diverse sources of information.

Rural and urban populations may experience these processes differently. Urban users frequently benefit from stronger connectivity, greater device availability, more diverse networks and closer exposure to digital industries. Rural users may rely on less stable connections, shared devices, limited data packages and locally concentrated social networks. Differences in education, occupation, gender, income and language may further influence digital participation within both settings.

The rural–urban distinction should not be treated as an absolute opposition. Rural communities are socially diverse, while urban populations also include economically disadvantaged and digitally excluded groups. Nevertheless, residence shapes infrastructure, institutional access, social networks and opportunities for digital skill acquisition. It therefore remains an important analytical dimension.

In India, this issue acquires particular importance because rapid expansion of mobile connectivity coexists with differences in digital literacy, language, gender and geographical access. Rural users are increasingly present on social media, but numerical participation does not establish that their voices receive equitable visibility. The International Telecommunication Union continues to identify rural–urban differences in meaningful connectivity, while Indian research has associated rural digital inequality with limitations in infrastructure, resources and digital skills.

The present paper uses the term **invisible inequality** to describe inequalities that emerge through routine processes of ranking, recommendation and engagement but remain difficult for users to observe. A rural creator may receive limited exposure without knowing whether the cause is content quality, network size, language, bandwidth, audience response or algorithmic ranking. Similarly, a rural user may encounter a relatively narrow range of information without being aware of what the platform has excluded.

The paper examines two related dimensions. **Content diversity** refers to the range of topics, sources, viewpoints, languages, geographical locations and cultural forms appearing in a user's feed. **User**

visibility refers to the likelihood that a person's content or profile will be displayed to others, recommended beyond an immediate network or included in trending and discovery systems.

2. Curated social media feeds

A curated feed is an ordered selection of content generated through automated and human processes. Platforms may consider predicted engagement, recency, relationship strength, content type, previous viewing behaviour and commercial priorities. The resulting feed is shaped by several interacting components rather than one isolated algorithm.

Personalisation can make content more relevant to individual interests. However, it may also repeatedly expose users to familiar sources and popular formats. When engagement becomes the dominant measure of relevance, emotionally provocative, already popular or socially familiar content may receive an advantage.

Content diversity: Content diversity is a multidimensional concept. It may include:

Diversity of sources and creators; Diversity of viewpoints; Diversity of topics; Geographical diversity; Linguistic diversity; Cultural and occupational diversity; and Exposure to content outside a user's immediate network.

A feed can appear varied because it contains many posts while remaining narrow in terms of sources, language or perspective. Content diversity should therefore not be measured only by the number of items displayed.

User visibility: User visibility refers to the extent to which a user, profile or contribution becomes discoverable within a platform. It can be reflected in impressions, reach, recommendations, search placement, follower growth, engagement and appearance in trending spaces.

Visibility is relational. One user becomes highly visible because the attention of many others is directed towards that user. As attention is limited, platform ranking systems effectively distribute a scarce resource. The distribution may appear merit-based while being influenced by network advantage, technical competence, production resources and familiarity with platform conventions.

Rural and urban social locations:

Residence affects technological infrastructure, educational opportunity, media practices and access to social capital. Urban users may have faster networks and greater exposure to professionalised content-production practices. Rural users may possess strong local networks and culturally distinctive knowledge but lack the technical or institutional resources needed to convert these strengths into wider platform visibility. The rural-urban framework is therefore employed as a relational category. It examines how geographical setting interacts with language, class, education, occupation and digital infrastructure.

3. Review of Literature

Algorithmic curation and the organisation of attention:

Gillespie (2014) argued that algorithms have become central mechanisms for selecting and ordering socially relevant information. He maintained that algorithms do not simply process neutral data; they establish criteria of relevance through which certain topics, sources and users become more visible than others. This insight is essential for studying curated feeds because it shifts attention from individual choice to the institutional organisation of visibility.

Bucher (2012) examined Facebook's algorithmic architecture and described the possibility of invisibility as a disciplinary threat. She argued that users adjust their behaviour because they are aware that their posts may disappear from others' feeds. Algorithmic power therefore operates not only by showing particular material but also by creating uncertainty about whether one is being seen.

Beer (2009) maintained that algorithms possess social power because they classify, sort and shape cultural encounters. He encouraged sociologists to investigate how algorithmic systems become embedded in everyday life. His work supports the view that feed curation should be treated as a social process through which attention and recognition are distributed.

Cotter (2019) studied how digital influencers interpret and respond to Instagram's algorithmic architecture. She described platform participation as a "visibility game" in which creators attempt to understand changing and partially hidden rules. Successful participation required strategic knowledge, continuous experimentation and the ability to adapt content to platform expectations. This process may favour creators who possess greater time, skills and resources.

Bishop (2019) examined the "algorithmic gossip" through which YouTube creators collectively develop explanations about platform visibility. She showed that creators share informal knowledge about posting schedules, monetisation and content formats when official information is inadequate. Such knowledge is unevenly distributed and may be less accessible to socially or geographically marginal creators.

Personalisation, filter bubbles and exposure diversity:

Pariser (2011) popularised the concept of the filter bubble to describe personalised information environments in which users may receive a limited range of perspectives without being aware of the exclusions. Although later research has questioned strong versions of the filter-bubble argument, Pariser's work remains important because it highlights the opacity of personalised selection.

Bakshy, Messing and Adamic (2015) examined exposure to ideologically diverse news on Facebook. They found that algorithmic ranking affected exposure, while users' own choices and network composition also played important roles. Their findings indicate that content diversity is jointly shaped by platform curation, social connections and individual behaviour rather than by algorithms alone.

Flaxman, Goel and Rao (2016) investigated online news consumption and found a complex relationship between digital media use and ideological segregation. Social media and search could expose users to material beyond their immediate habits, but they could also increase ideological distance between consumed sources. The study cautioned against treating online information environments as either wholly diversifying or uniformly isolating.

Cinelli et al. (2021) compared information consumption across multiple social media platforms and found that platform design influenced the formation of echo chambers. Their research demonstrated that the degree of segregation varied across platforms, indicating that content diversity is affected by both user behaviour and the architecture of particular systems.

Helberger, Karppinen and D'Acunto (2018) proposed exposure diversity as a design principle for recommender systems. They argued that diversity cannot be reduced to a single technical measure because it involves competing democratic and cultural values. Recommender systems should consider not only individual preference satisfaction but also the wider quality of public communication.

Visibility, popularity and cumulative advantage:

Noble (2018) demonstrated that ranking systems can reproduce dominant commercial and cultural

hierarchies. Search and recommendation systems may make already powerful groups more visible while presenting ranked outputs as objective relevance. Her work illustrates how algorithmic visibility can reproduce broader inequalities of representation.

O'Neil (2016) explained that opaque mathematical systems can intensify inequality when their classifications operate at scale and cannot easily be challenged. Although her analysis extends beyond social media, it is relevant because users rarely receive a meaningful explanation for changes in reach, discoverability or recommendation.

Messias et al. (2020) examined the visibility of minority users in people-recommender systems. They found that network homophily could generate unequal visibility for minority groups. Their study demonstrated that even a recommender without explicitly discriminatory rules can produce disparate outcomes when it operates on socially unequal networks.

Fabbri et al. (2022) investigated the long-term effects of exposure inequality in people-recommendation systems. Their simulations showed that repeated recommendations can create feedback processes through which already visible users accumulate further exposure. This suggests that short-term ranking differences may develop into durable visibility inequalities.

Bandy and Diakopoulos (2022) applied distributional inequality measures to content recommendation. They found that attention on social media can become highly concentrated, with a relatively small group receiving a large share of engagement. Their analysis supports the use of measures such as the Gini coefficient when evaluating whether platform visibility is equitably distributed.

Digital inequality and geographical difference:

van Dijk (2020) described the digital divide as a cumulative process involving motivation, material access, skills and usage. He argued that physical connectivity does not guarantee equal participation or equal outcomes. The framework is relevant to rural–urban comparison because geographical differences may appear at each stage.

Hargittai (2002) introduced the concept of the second-level digital divide, emphasising differences in people's online skills after access has been obtained. Her work suggests that users with similar internet connections may vary substantially in their capacity to search, evaluate information, manage privacy and use digital platforms strategically.

Robinson et al. (2015) demonstrated that digital inequality is connected with education, income, social support and other forms of structural inequality. They argued that privileged groups often gain greater advantages from digital resources because they can integrate them into established networks and opportunities. Digital participation may therefore reproduce cumulative social advantage.

Salemink, Strijker and Bosworth (2017) reviewed digital development in rural areas and found that rural communities often face a combination of infrastructure limitations and gaps in adoption or effective use. They emphasised that extending connectivity does not automatically resolve differences in skill, relevance and institutional support.

Philip, Cottrill, Farrington, Williams and Ashmore (2017) examined rural digital inequality relationally. They argued that rural disadvantage is produced through interactions among infrastructure, policy, economic priorities and everyday practices. Rurality should not be understood merely as physical distance; it is shaped by institutional decisions concerning investment and service provision.

Lythreathis, Singh and El-Kassar (2022) reviewed digital-divide research and concluded that contemporary inequality includes access, competence and beneficial outcomes. Their analysis highlighted geography, age, education, income and gender as intersecting determinants. This provides a

foundation for examining rural–urban differences in content diversity and visibility rather than limiting analysis to connectivity.

Rural creators and platform participation:

Nayaka, Vemireddy and Dwivedi (2025) examined village YouTubers and rural creator cultures in South India. They found that rural creators used collective production, local language, humour and cultural identity to build audiences. Their study also showed that rural content production involves negotiation with platform expectations and unstable forms of digital labour. Rural creators are therefore not simply excluded; they actively create new forms of platformised cultural production.

Rathje, Van Bavel and van der Linden (2021) found that social media engagement can be strongly driven by expressions of hostility towards opposing groups. Their analysis raises concerns about systems that treat engagement as a neutral measure of value. Rural cultural content that is locally informative but less provocative may be disadvantaged when it competes against highly emotional or polarising material.

Chopra et al. (2025) examined gender and socio-economic inequalities in social-media-based listening in India. Their work showed that online data do not uniformly represent entire communities and that gendered and socio-economic differences affect social media engagement and information use. The authors recommended combining online and offline evidence when drawing conclusions about populations.

Laskar and Nath (2023) compared the emergence of digital society in rural and urban India. They observed that rural users frequently face inadequate infrastructure, limited resources and lower proficiency in the use of digital technologies. They also noted that device ownership does not necessarily result in equivalent educational or developmental use.

Research gap:

The literature establishes that algorithms organise visibility, personalised feeds can influence exposure diversity and recommender systems may reproduce network inequalities. It also shows that digital access, skill and outcomes vary according to social and geographical location.

Nevertheless, three important gaps remain. First, studies of curated feeds commonly focus on political polarisation, misinformation or ideological echo chambers. Less attention has been paid to geographical diversity and the visibility of rural users as a sociological issue.

Second, digital-divide research frequently measures connectivity, device ownership and digital skills but does not examine what happens after users enter algorithmically curated platforms. Rural and urban users may both use social media while encountering different informational environments and visibility opportunities.

Third, studies of creators often focus on influencers who have already achieved a degree of visibility. The experiences of ordinary rural creators whose content receives little exposure remain comparatively underexamined.

Access: quality of connectivity, devices and data affordability;

Skills: ability to use platforms and interpret their rules;

Participation: capacity to produce, circulate and discover content;

Outcomes: visibility, recognition, information diversity and economic opportunity.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study has the following four objectives:

1. To examine rural–urban differences in the diversity of content encountered through algorithmically curated social media feeds.
2. To analyse how residence, connectivity, language, digital skills and network structure influence the visibility of social media users and creators.
3. To identify the mechanisms through which engagement-based recommendation systems may reproduce or intensify geographical inequalities.
4. To recommend socially inclusive measures for improving content diversity and equitable user visibility on social media platforms.

5. Research Questions

1. How does the diversity of content encountered in social media feeds differ between rural and urban social locations?
2. Which social, technological and linguistic factors influence the relative visibility of rural and urban users?
3. How do recommendation systems interact with existing rural–urban inequalities to produce cumulative visibility advantages or disadvantages?
4. What platform-design and policy measures can promote geographically inclusive social media participation?

6. Research Methodology

Research design: The study adopts a **qualitative, analytical and review-based research design**. A structured narrative review was considered appropriate because the subject extends across sociology, media studies, rural studies, communication, computer science and platform governance.

The study does not claim to present an original survey, experiment or platform dataset. Its findings arise from a thematic synthesis of published research and institutional evidence.

Nature and sources of data:

Secondary data were drawn from: Peer-reviewed journal articles; Academic books; Conference proceedings; Research reports; Government and intergovernmental publications; and Studies of social media algorithms, rural communication and digital inequality.

Priority was given to sources directly addressing at least one of the following:

Feed ranking or content recommendation; Exposure or content diversity; Algorithmic visibility; Digital inequality; Rural–urban differences; Linguistic representation; Creator participation; or Social media use in India.

Search strategy : Relevant literature was identified through combinations of terms such as:

“algorithmic curation and social media”; “curated feeds and content diversity”; “algorithmic visibility”; “rural–urban digital divide”; “social media recommender systems”; “rural content creators”; “platform visibility inequality”; and “India rural social media use.”

Inclusion criteria: Sources were included when they:

1. Examined algorithmic selection, ranking, recommendation or visibility;
2. Addressed diversity, inequality, rurality or geographical difference;
3. Presented a clear empirical, theoretical or policy contribution;
4. Were available in English; and
5. Had sufficient publication information for academic citation.

Exclusion criteria: Sources were excluded when they:

Focused only on technical prediction accuracy without social implications; Discussed rural connectivity without relevance to digital participation; Made unsupported claims about platform algorithms; Were promotional materials without analytical value; or Duplicated evidence already represented by a stronger source.

Method of analysis:

The literature was analysed through thematic coding. The first stage identified recurring concepts, including connectivity, device quality, language, digital skills, network size, content diversity, creator visibility and engagement. In the second stage, related codes were organised into broader themes. In the third stage, relationships among the themes were interpreted through digital-inequality theory, Bourdieu's theory of capital and cumulative advantage.

Ethical considerations:

The study uses publicly available academic and institutional sources and does not process personal data. It avoids attributing deliberate discrimination to platforms without evidence. It also distinguishes established findings from analytical inferences.

Limitations:

The review is limited by restricted public access to platform ranking systems and geographically disaggregated recommendation data. Platforms frequently change their algorithms, making direct comparison difficult. "Rural" and "urban" also represent internally diverse categories. The findings should therefore be interpreted as a conceptual synthesis rather than statistical estimates of rural–urban differences.

7. Analysis:

Material access as an input to algorithmic curation: Feed algorithms learn from observable behaviour. The quality of this behavioural record depends partly on material access. Users with reliable connectivity can watch videos fully, explore new accounts, upload regularly and respond quickly to trends. Users with unstable connections may abandon videos, avoid data-intensive content and interact intermittently. These behaviours may be interpreted by the platform as preferences even when they reflect infrastructural constraints. A rural user may watch fewer long-form educational videos because of data cost or buffering, not because of lack of interest. Yet the recommender system may learn to provide fewer such videos. Material inequality can consequently become informational inequality. Technical constraints shape behavioural data; behavioural data shape recommendations; recommendations shape future behaviour.

Network structure and content diversity: Social media recommendations are frequently influenced by social connections. Rural users whose online networks largely consist of nearby family and community members may encounter culturally relevant information but lower geographical or occupational diversity. Urban users may possess networks spanning educational institutions, workplaces, interest groups and professional communities. Local concentration should not automatically be treated as deficient. Rural networks may provide trust, solidarity and useful knowledge. The concern arises when recommender systems repeatedly amplify network homogeneity and reduce opportunities for wider discovery. Network homophily may also influence creator visibility. A rural creator beginning with a smaller or less digitally active network may receive fewer initial interactions. Since early engagement can influence further distribution, network differences may become algorithmic visibility differences.

Language and cultural format: Language is central to rural–urban feed inequality. Content produced in English or widely represented languages may benefit from larger audiences, stronger moderation resources and more developed language models. Content in regional languages, dialects or mixed speech may be less accurately classified, captioned or recommended. Cultural format also matters. Urban lifestyle, consumer culture and professionally edited visual formats may correspond more closely with dominant advertising and influencer economies. Rural content may be judged through engagement signals developed in environments where urban cultural styles are already prominent. At the same time, vernacular content can create strong audience identification and community participation. Rural creators may achieve visibility by presenting local humour, agriculture, food, folk culture, everyday labour and village life. The outcome is therefore not inevitable exclusion but unequal conditions of discoverability.

Digital literacy and knowledge of platform rules: Digital literacy includes the ability to search, verify, create, protect privacy and interpret algorithmic feedback. Visibility requires additional knowledge: creators must understand titles, thumbnails, hashtags, posting frequency, audience retention, analytics and community interaction. Urban creators may have greater access to training, professional networks and examples of successful content production. Rural users may develop these skills informally through experimentation and peer support. Because platform rules are opaque and frequently changing, those with more time and resources can experiment at lower personal risk. The visibility game described by Cotter (2019) is therefore socially differentiated. Not every user enters it with the same information or capacity.

Engagement optimisation and content diversity: Platforms commonly use engagement as an important relevance signal. This can produce three consequences.

First, already popular creators receive more data and opportunities for recommendation. Second, emotional or controversial content may outperform locally useful but less sensational material. Third, content that fits familiar formats is easier for audiences and algorithms to recognise.

For rural users, engagement optimisation may reduce exposure to diverse developmental information if entertainment and emotionally intense content generate stronger short-term reactions. However, the relationship must not be oversimplified. Recommendation systems may also introduce rural users to educational, agricultural and health information that would otherwise be inaccessible.

The sociological question is whether users exercise meaningful choice or whether platform incentives disproportionately shape their informational environment.

Visibility as labour: Producing visible social media content requires labour. Creators plan material, record, edit, caption, upload, respond to audiences and monitor performance. This labour is often unpaid and undertaken without assurance of visibility. Rural creators may face additional costs, including travel for connectivity, electricity interruptions, limited equipment and social restrictions concerning public self-presentation. Women in rural communities may experience particular constraints related to device ownership, domestic responsibilities, privacy and reputational risk.

8. Results of the Thematic Synthesis:

The thematic synthesis generated five principal results. These findings represent conclusions from the reviewed literature and should not be interpreted as original survey statistics.

Result 1: Connectivity differences shape the data from which feeds learn

Rural–urban infrastructure gaps affect how often users interact, which formats they select and how

consistently they create content. Algorithmic systems may treat connectivity-constrained behaviour as genuine preference. Rural users can consequently be placed in narrower recommendation pathways.

Result 2: Rural users face a risk of reduced multidimensional content diversity

The literature does not establish that every rural feed is less diverse than every urban feed. It nevertheless identifies conditions that can reduce source, topic, language and geographical diversity. These include homogeneous networks, limited exploratory use, data-saving behaviour and inadequate representation of local content.

Result 3: Visibility is influenced by pre-existing capital

Economic capital supports better equipment and consistent production. Cultural capital supports fluency in dominant languages and recognised content styles. Social capital supplies early engagement and bridging connections. Algorithmic ranking can translate these resources into additional symbolic capital in the form of followers, credibility and influence.

Result 4: Engagement-based ranking creates cumulative feedback loops

Early attention increases the probability of further exposure. Users who begin with larger or more active networks can enter self-reinforcing cycles of visibility. Rural creators starting from smaller networks or irregular connectivity may struggle to enter the same cycle, even when their content is locally valuable.

Result 5: Rural creators exercise agency through collective and vernacular strategies

The review also identifies resistance and innovation. Rural creators use local languages, collaborative production and culturally distinctive narratives to build audiences. Their practices challenge the assumption that digital culture flows only from cities to villages. Nevertheless, such agency operates within platform structures that creators cannot fully observe or control.

9. Discussion

The findings show that rural–urban inequality does not end when a rural user opens a social media account. Access represents the beginning of participation rather than its completion. The key issue is what users can do after access and what the platform does with their behaviour.

The analysis complicates the traditional digital-divide model. Physical connectivity remains important, but curated platforms introduce another level of inequality: the **algorithmic participation divide**. This divide concerns differences in discoverability, exposure diversity and capacity to influence the informational environment.

Bourdieu's theory helps explain why algorithmic visibility may appear meritocratic while reflecting unequal capital. Platforms count likes, shares, followers and viewing time as behavioural signals. These measurements seem objective, yet users differ in their ability to generate them. Professional equipment, language fluency, network reach and available time contribute to measurable engagement.

The relationship between rurality and visibility is not uniformly negative. Rural identity can become a distinctive cultural resource. Local food, agriculture, humour, music and everyday life may attract urban and transregional audiences. Nayaka et al. (2025) demonstrate that village creators can develop meaningful platform cultures. However, exceptional success stories should not be treated as evidence that structural inequality has disappeared.

The results also challenge a narrow understanding of diversity. Platforms may offer numerous items while repeatedly recommending similar cultural forms. A socially meaningful measure of diversity should examine whose knowledge is present, which regions are represented and whether users encounter material outside dominant commercial categories.

Content diversity and user visibility are mutually connected. A platform cannot provide genuinely diverse feeds if visibility remains concentrated among a narrow group of creators. Similarly, supporting rural creators has limited effect if recommendation systems do not expose users to geographically varied content.

The findings further suggest that chronological feeds are not automatically fair. Chronological ordering may reduce some ranking effects, but users with larger networks and higher posting frequency can still dominate attention. The policy goal should therefore be accountable curation, not the complete removal of recommendation.

The analysis is consistent with the sociotechnical perspective. Rural–urban differences cannot be attributed solely to platform code. They emerge through interactions among infrastructure, education, language, household resources, social networks, platform design and commercial incentives.

10. Recommendations

Conduct geographically disaggregated audits: Platforms should assess content exposure and creator reach across rural and urban users. Aggregate performance can conceal disparities. Audits should examine language, gender, region and socio-economic position alongside residence.

Measure exposure diversity: Platforms should evaluate source, topic, language, viewpoint and geographical diversity. A diversity measure based only on the number of posts or categories would be inadequate.

Support multilingual recommendation: Content classification, captioning, moderation and recommendation should function reliably across regional languages, dialects and mixed-language communication. Local-language creators should participate in evaluation.

Provide user control over feeds: Users should be able to select chronological, local, exploratory and diversity-oriented feed options. Controls should be expressed in clear language and remain easy to locate.

Improve visibility transparency: Creators should receive understandable explanations of the factors affecting distribution. Platforms need not disclose security-sensitive code, but they should explain major ranking signals, content restrictions and appeal procedures.

Establish rural creator-support programmes : Universities, government institutions and civil-society organisations can provide training in content production, digital safety, analytics, copyright and responsible monetisation.

Protect against engagement manipulation : Platforms should avoid treating engagement as the sole measure of social value. Public-interest, educational and locally relevant content may require different evaluation criteria.

Preserve human review and grievance mechanisms : Users should be able to challenge incorrect moderation, account restrictions and unexplained reductions in visibility. Grievance procedures should be available in regional languages.

Encourage independent research access : Privacy-protective access to platform data is necessary for examining geographical inequalities. Independent researchers should be able to study recommendation outcomes without exposing identifiable user information.

11. Conclusion:

Social media feeds are curated environments in which visibility and information are unequally

distributed. Rural and urban users may access the same platform but participate under different material, linguistic, educational and network conditions. These differences influence both the diversity of content users encounter and the likelihood that their own contributions become visible.

The review shows that algorithmic systems do not independently create every rural–urban inequality. They interact with existing differences in connectivity, capital, language, digital literacy and network structure. Engagement-based ranking can convert these differences into cumulative visibility advantages. Users who begin with stronger resources generate more interaction, obtain wider exposure and accumulate further recognition.

Rural users are not passive recipients of technological disadvantage. They use local languages, collective production and culturally grounded narratives to develop distinctive forms of digital participation. Nevertheless, individual creativity cannot replace institutional responsibility. Equitable participation requires platforms to examine how their systems distribute attention across regions and social groups.

The central conclusion is that digital inclusion must be evaluated beyond access. A socially inclusive platform should provide meaningful opportunities to encounter diverse content, express local identities, become discoverable and challenge unfair outcomes. Content diversity and user visibility must therefore be recognised as important dimensions of contemporary social equality.

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