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Role of Social Media in Shaping Political Attitudes among Indian Millennials

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Abstract

This work seeks to establish the relationship between social media and the political perceptions of the Indian millennials given that they are the most active digital media users. The research question is derived from the current popularity of social media in politics and scarce empirical research on the effects of social media within the Indian context. Therefore, the current study uses secondary data to synthesize the literature and analyze how social media usage, the kind of content, and interactions affect political beliefs. The data collection and analysis techniques used in this research are thematic analysis of the information gathered from academic journals, industry reports, and credible online articles.

Main discoveries show that the frequency of social media use is positively connected with the level of political participation, however, the type of this participation depends on the content of the material shared and the form of the involvement. The study also reveals that social media acts as a source of information to the voters thus making the electorate informed and at the same time social media can also spread fake news thus polarizing the voters. As for the findings of the study, the first conclusion deals with the need for increased media literacy and, therefore, the consumption of a greater variety of content to counteract the negative consequences of echo chambers and misinformation, to promote a less polarized political debate among Indian millennials.

Keywords: Social media, political attitudes, Indian millenials, misinformations, content consumption, online interactions.

Introduction

Nowadays, social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have grown into tools that influence political perception among Indian millennials. Due to their easy, fast and most of all engaging accessibility they are the main sources of political information and tools for political debate. Social media contributes to the formation of the politico-public sphere by enabling politics and political opinions to be voiced, yet at the same time, it reinforces echo chambers and promotes fake news[1]. Although there are countless works done on the role of social media in politics globally, there is a Research Gap on Indian millennials. This paper seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the nature of social media use, content consumption, and online interactions that shape political attitudes.

Objective

The aim of this study is to identify the effects that social media has on the political perceptions of Indian millennials based on various factors like the frequency of social media use, the kind of content consumed, and the interactions happening online. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to establish how these elements influence the formation of political beliefs and behaviours in the context of India.

Research Questions

I. How does social media shape the political attitudes of Indian millennials and the function of agenda-setting in this process?

II. What extent and how does the Indian millennial's social media usage pattern relate to their political activities?

III. What does the exposure of Indian millennials to various forms of content on social media such as news articles and user-generated content do to their political thinking?

IV. What ways do Indian millennials' online interactions in echo chambers or diverse environments affect the polarization or moderation of their political attitudes?

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[1]Banerjee, S. and Chaudhuri, B.R., 2022. Brand love and party preference of young political consumers (voters). *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*, *19*(3), pp.475-503.

Literature Review

Social Media and Political Attitudes

Figure: Social Media influence citizen politically[2].

Social media platforms are now critical to political communication as sources of information and as sites of political discussion. Agenda-setting theory, which is originally applicable to print and electronic media is also applicable in the case of social media. These platforms can select some issues and angles and thus influence the audience on what is significant[3]. In India, this power can be seen during the election periods and significant political events where social media is yet again a field for power struggle.

Social Media Usage

The level and the frequency of using social media are highly related to the level of political activism[4]. The Indian millennials are one of the most engaged social media audiences globally and turn to social media to get their political news from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These platforms act as both, a source of information and a place where people can get involved in politics and support their political agenda in a way they couldn't do before with traditional media.

[2]Mude, G. and Undale, S., 2023. Social media usage: A comparison between Generation Y and Generation Z in India. *International Journal of E-Business Research (IJEBR)*, *19*(1), pp.1-20.

[3]Mude, G. and Undale, S., 2023. Social media usage: A comparison between Generation Y and Generation Z in India. *International Journal of E-Business Research (IJEBR)*, *19*(1), pp.1-20.

[4]Arora, T., Kumar, A. and Agarwal, B., 2020. Impact of social media advertising on millennials buying behaviour. *International Journal of Intelligent Enterprise*, *7*(4), pp.481-500.
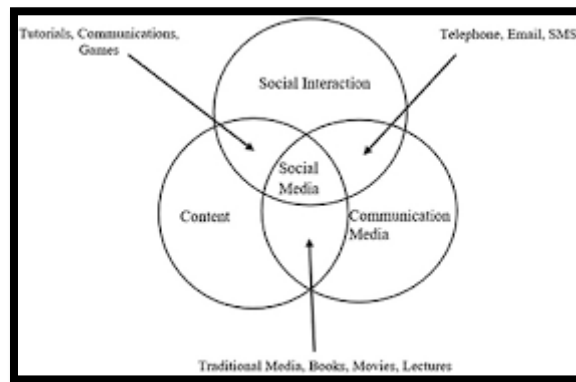
Types of Content Consumed

Figure: Types of Content consumed from social media for Politicians[5].

The kind of content that is posted on social media has a big influence on the political perception of people. News articles and opinion pieces which may be from credible news platforms or influential people give the user a perspective and insight hence they can build their own opinions[6]. This kind of content is usually connected with more informed political opinions, as well as it requires users to read more sides of a question and think over it. On the other hand, user-created content like memes, videos, and personal posts can produce a different kind of effect. The nature of user-generated content is that it is easily replicable and thus, fake news can easily reach a large number of people and sway their political opinions[7].

The viewing of content on social media is also affected by the algorithms that determine what content to show the users[8]. The types of information that are aligned to their existing beliefs. This can result in the users becoming more and more extreme in their political views and less willing to listen to others and their opinions.

Online Interactions

Another important factor that has an impact on political beliefs is online communication via social networks[9]. Most social media accounts promote the creation of echo chambers, where

[5] Jasrotia, S.S., Darda, P. and Pandey, S., 2023. Changing values of millennials and centennials towards responsible consumption and sustainable society. *Society and Business Review*, *18*(2), pp.244-263.

[6] Jasrotia, S.S., Darda, P. and Pandey, S., 2023. Changing values of millennials and centennials towards responsible consumption and sustainable society. *Society and Business Review*, *18*(2), pp.244-263.

[7] Ullah, A.A., Ferdous, J. and Chattoraj, D., 2024. Social, political and cultural remittances: implications for the origin and destination countries. *Millennial Asia*, *15*(1), pp.72-88.

[8] Blandi, L., Sabbatucci, M., Dallagiacoma, G., Alberti, F., Bertuccio, P. and Odone, A., 2022. Digital information approach through social media among Gen Z and Millennials: The global scenario during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Vaccines*, *10*(11), p.1822.

[9] Ardi, Z. and Putri, S.A., 2020. The analysis of the social media impact on the millennial generation behavior and social interactions. *Southeast Asian Journal of Technology and Science*, *1*(2), pp.70-77.

a group of people only communicates with other people who think alike. In this environment, the users are presented with information that is congruent with their viewpoint, thus increasing extremity.
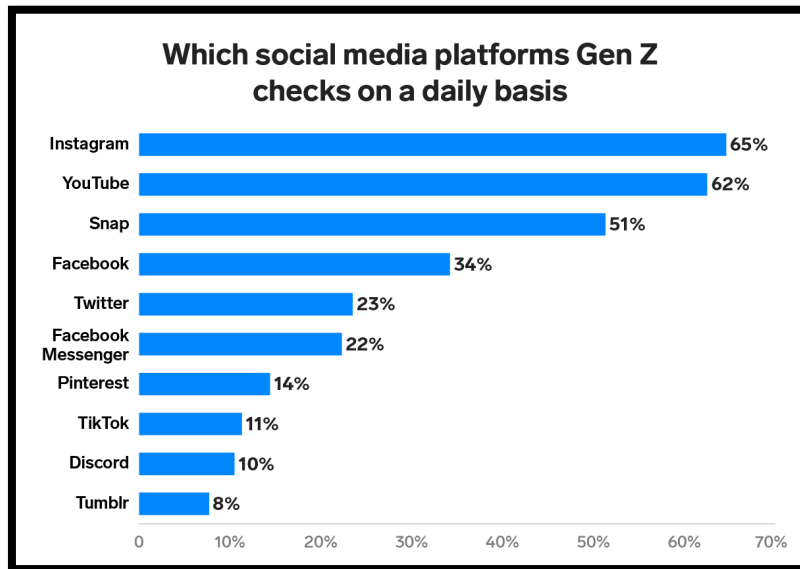

Figure: Social Media platform Gen Z utilises mostly (Instagram)[10]

This exposure can happen in direct contact with others, by consuming the content created by people with different attitudes, or by engaging in discussions in the more diverse online communitiesFurther, it is that most social media platform the Gen Z check is Instagram [11]. This is also a function of the design of the social media platforms which define the nature of interaction that is possible. Elements like comments, likes and shares prompt users to interact with the content thus with other users, to express and even change their political standpoint[12].

Gap in the literature

To date, there is still a rather limited comprehension of these processes concerning the Indian millennial generation and its relationship with social media. This demographic is special when it comes to their digital behaviour and the political scenario of the country, India. This paper seeks to analyze this group's political attitudes and the role played by social media in

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[10]Chellasamy, A., Almeida, S.M., Prakash, G.S., Nagarathinam, A. and Rangasamy, S., 2022. Social media disengagement among gen y and gen z: a quantitative investigation. *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, *5*(1), pp.230-252.

[11]Chellasamy, A., Almeida, S.M., Prakash, G.S., Nagarathinam, A. and Rangasamy, S., 2022. Social media disengagement among gen y and gen z: a quantitative investigation. *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, *5*(1), pp.230-252.

[12]Coelho, K. and Sood, A., 2022. Urban studies in India across the millennial turn: Histories and futures. *Urban Studies*, *59*(13), pp.2613-2637.

shaping them to unravel the broader impact of digital media on the political process in India. This will help to fill this research gap that can help to explain how social media can be used in enhancing better and balanced political deliberation.

Methodology

This research work is qualitative research that uses a literature review, reports, and data to analyse the social media and political perception change among the Indian millennials[13]. The research method used in this paper is a thematic analysis of the literature with the three major categories; usage of social media, type of content and interaction.

Data Collection

To gather information for this research, both quantitative and qualitative data were used which was obtained from academic journals, industry reports and other credible articles and publications over the internet. These sources were chosen about the chosen topic of the research and the reliability of the information presented. The literature review includes research on the usage of social media, the effects of various forms of content on political perception, and the part played by online interactions in the formation of political perception.

Systematic analysis table

Sl no.	Author	Year	Title	Focus	Key Findings	Relevance
1	Thangavel, P., Pathak, P. and Chandra, B.,	2021	Millennials and Generation Z: a generational cohort analysis of Indian consumer	Comparison between Gen Z and Millennial consumer behaviour in India	draws attention to the variations in consumer behaviour and tastes between the two groups.	Sheds light on generational disparities that are pertinent to consumer research.

[13]Thangavel, P., Pathak, P. and Chandra, B., 2021. Millennials and Generation Z: a generational cohort analysis of Indian consumers. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, *28*(7), pp.2157-2177.

2	Au, A.,	2020	Reconceptualizing the generation in a digital (izing) modernit	Social networking and digital media's effects on generational identities	Explains how conventional generational dynamics are altered and how modern media blurs borders between generations.	Helpful in comprehending changes in the digital age between generations.
3	Mulvey, M.S., Lever, M.W. and Elliot, S.,	2020	A cross-national comparison of intragenerational variability in social media sharing	Differences in social media sharing behaviours between nations	Demonstrates the differences in social media sharing habits between generations and countries.	Significant for research on social media usage across cultural boundaries.
4	Konsongsaen. P	2021	Thai millennials' online political engagement	The reasons driving Thai millennials' online	Examines Thai millennials' motives and	Pertinent to research on millennials' involvement

				political participation	actions in online political forums.	in politics
5	Anshari, M., Alas, Y., Razzaq, A., Shahrill, M. and Lim, S.A.,	2021	Millennials consumers' behaviors between trends and experiments	Millennials' inclinations in terms of trends and novel experiences.	Examines the reactions of millennials to emerging trends and novel consumptio n practices.	Understandin gs on the habits and propensities of millennial consumers.
6	Malhotra, P.,	2024	Misinformatio n in WhatsApp family groups	Perceptions of false information and rectification in WhatsApp groups across diverse generations	Investigates how various generations view and respond to false information in personal WhatsApp groups.	Accommodat ing in comprehendi ng how different generations respond to false information.
7	Naser, M.N.A. and Ismail, S.A.,	2020	The influence of advertising value on brashness	University students' opinions about	Examines how opinions about	Pertinent to research on the efficacy of political

			toward political advertising in social media	political advertisements on social media	political advertisements on social media are prejudiced by the perceived value of advertising.	promotion.
8	Lyngdoh, T., El-Manstrly, D. and Jeesha, K.,	Social isolation and social anxiety as drivers of generation Z's willingness to share personal information on social media	Social isolation and social anxiety as drivers of generation Z's willingness to share personal information on social media	Effects of anxiety and social isolation on Gen Z's social media sharing behaviours	Demonstrates how social elements like anxiety and loneliness affect Gen Z's propensity to divulge personal information.	Insights into Gen Z's psychological makeup and social media habits.
9	Shamsi, M.S., Narula, S. and	2022	Does environmental awareness via SNSs create sustainable	Environmental consciousness's effect on millennials'	Reveals that millennials' aspirations to engage in sustainable	crucial to comprehending how SNS encourage sustainable

	Sharma, A.,		consumption intention among the millennials	ambitions for sustainable consumerism	consumption are influenced by their social media-based environmental knowledge.	behaviour.

Table: Descriptive Analysis of Systematic reviews

(Source: Created by Author)

Data Analysis

The analysis involved categorizing the data into themes related to the main variables: The present study focuses on the extent of social media usage, the kinds of content consumed, and the nature of online interactions. Due to the use of the thematic method, it was possible to establish patterns and trends that define the effects of such factors on the political perception of Indian millennials[14]. The conclusions were drawn to give a general understanding of the ways and extent of social media's influence on the political attitudes of this demographic.

Findings

The analysis of secondary research highlights several key findings regarding the influence of social media on political attitudes among Indian millennials:

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[14]Au, A., 2020. Reconceptualizing the generation in a digital (izing) modernity: Digital media, social networking sites, and the flattening of generations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *50*(2), pp.163-183.
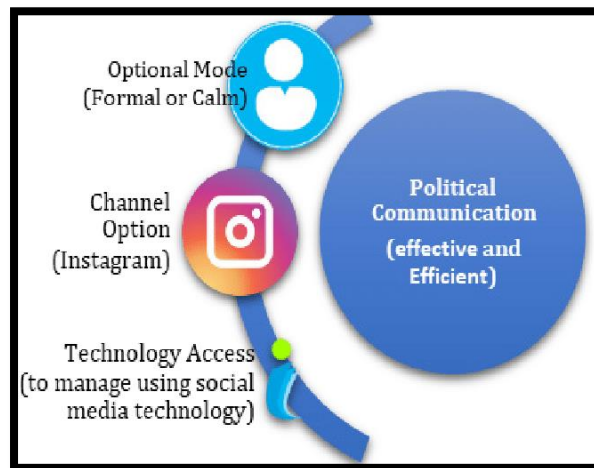
Social Media Usage

Figure: Political communicationdisseminated by Social media[15]

It has been observed that the young generation of India is politically active and uses social media frequently. People who use social media platforms more often are likely to hold a strong political stance and engage in political activities[15]. Political communication is easily and instantaneously disseminated on social media, especially during important political events like elections. Nonetheless, such effects depend on the kind of content that is being consumed and the interactions people have on social media[15].

Types of Content Consumed

Figure: Memes add humous to Politics[16]

The kind of information that is posted on social media applications significantly influences the political perception of the public. The consumers of news articles and opinion pieces among the millennials are likely to have a better and more complex understanding of politics.

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[15]Mulvey, M.S., Lever, M.W. and Elliot, S., 2020. A cross-national comparison of intragenerational variability in social media sharing. *Journal of Travel Research*, *59*(7), pp.1204-1220.

Such content offers background information and thoughts for consideration enabling the users to grasp political subjects and develop their viewpoints.

While those who rely more on user-generated content like memes and videos are more likely to fall for fake news[16]. The fact that this content is viral ensures that it gets to many people and in this case, many people's political stand is shaped. Because social media is the most used source of information in India, especially in politics, the country is vulnerable to the manipulation of political attitudes. The use of social media is also dependent on algorithms which determine the kinds of content that are shown to people.
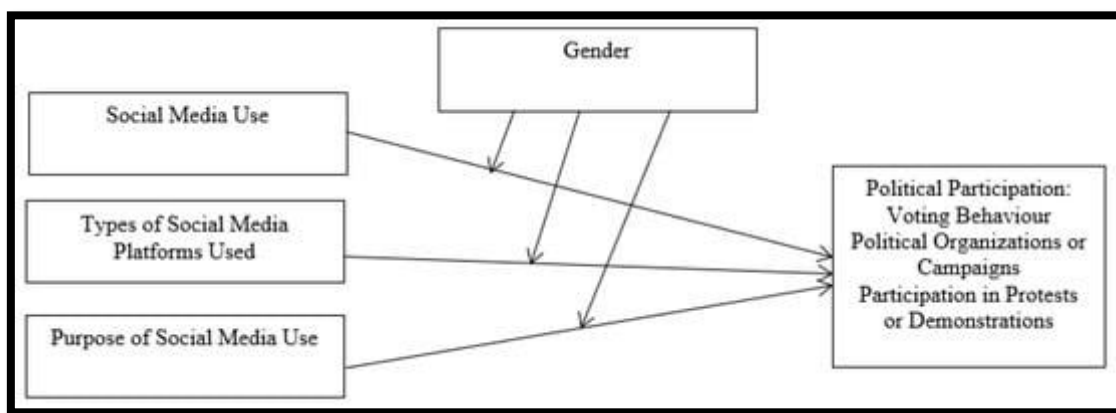
Online Interactions

Figure: Online Interaction for political particiaption[17]

This is because the nature of interaction on social media also plays a very important role in shaping political opinion[17]. This study revealed that millennials who have political conversations within echo chambers, which an environment that is filled with similar-minded individuals, end up having more rigid political viewpoints. Such echo chambers work to strengthen people's opinions and limit their access to opinions that differ from theirs, thus increasing polarization. On the other hand, individuals who engage in diverse forms of online discussions that contain different political opinions are likely to develop moderate and balanced political beliefs[18]. Through exposure to different opinions, the users can challenge their own opinions and open their minds towards the possibilities of other opinions thus enabling them to gain a better understanding of the political issues at hand.

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[16]Konsongsaen, P., 2021. *Thai millennials' online political engagement: investigating mechanisms behind their motivation* (Doctoral dissertation, Bangkok University).

[17]Anshari, M., Alas, Y., Razzaq, A., Shahrill, M. and Lim, S.A., 2021. Millennials consumers' behaviors between trends and experiments. In *Research Anthology on E-Commerce Adoption, Models, and Applications for Modern Business* (pp. 1492-1508). IGI global.

[18]Malhotra, P., 2024. Misinformation in WhatsApp family groups: Generational perceptions and correction considerations in a Meso-news space. *Digital journalism*, *12*(5), pp.594-612.

Also, the fact that people are not likely to encounter their counterparts in the physical world may affect how they present their political opinions indeed, people may feel more comfortable posting extreme opinions online than they would offline[19].

Discussion

Through the secondary research, the following observation can be made regarding the political socialization of Indian millennials through social media. Thus, on the one hand, social media can provide users with information, on the other hand, it can give users fake information, and that is why this tool is often a sword with two edges in the sphere of political communication. It is a means of political participation and information sharing but has its drawbacks such as spreading fake news and amplifying people's opinions.

Role of Content and Interaction

The kind of content that is being shared on social media is very important in defining the quality of political interactions among Indian millennials[20]. News and opinions found in newspapers and other articles help in shaping proper political views while User-generated content can create more factualistic or socio-political views. This dissonance points to the fact that more awareness needs to be created concerning media literacy to enable users to discern between the two types of content.

Other interactions also contribute to the shaping of political attitudes; these are online interactions. The amplification of echo chambers on social networking sites can escalate political polarisation because it keeps people in their comfort zones and they do not get to encounter other opinions[21]. But, encouraging the diversification of interactions in the online sphere can mitigate these negative consequences by encouraging a healthier political debate.

Limitations

This paper is a desktop study and as such has some inherent limitations that are associated with secondary data analysis. The use of literature and data makes the study's outcomes

[19]Naser, M.N.A. and Ismail, S.A., 2020. The influence of advertising value on attitude toward political advertising in social media among university students. *International Journal of Politics, Public Policy and Social Works*, *2*(7), pp.93-107.

[20]Lyngdoh, T., El-Manstrly, D. and Jeesha, K., 2023. Social isolation and social anxiety as drivers of generation Z's willingness to share personal information on social media. *Psychology & Marketing*, *40*(1), pp.5-26.

[21]Shamsi, M.S., Narula, S. and Sharma, A., 2022. Does environmental awareness via SNSs create sustainable consumption intention among the millennials. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication*, *15*(8), pp.100-116

limited by the availability, relevance, and context of prior research. In this case, the present study does not involve primary data collection, and as such, it has the following major limitation in contributing fresh empirical data to the literatur. Furthermore, the studies selected for this review might not have adequately captured the developmental changes that are constantly occurring in the use of social media and its effects on political perceptions, especially in a complex nation such as India[22].

Recommendations

Given these limitations, several recommendations can be made for future research and practice:

Primary Research: Further research should also try to obtain data collected from Indian millennials through surveys or interviews since the data used in this study is three years old[23]. It could give a more detailed understanding of how the use of social media, the consumption of content and the interactions online in current society affect their political perceptions.

Longitudinal Studies: More research has to be conducted to understand the changes that occur in the political attitude of individuals over some time, especially the one that has to do with using social media. Such studies would be of immense benefit in giving a general view of how social media affects the political beliefs and actions of society[24].

Media Literacy Programs: To counter the effects of fake news and echo chambers, it is suggested that educational institutions and other stakeholders encourage the use of media literacy programs. Such programs should work towards empowering the youth to be able to analyze the information they receive from the internet and also to be able to engage in healthy political discussions.

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[22]Seth, A., De, S., Arya, A., Wilkinson, S., Singh, S. and Pal, J., 2022, June. Closed Ranks: The Discursive Value of Military Support for Indian Politicians on Social Media. In *Proceedings of the 2022 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development* (pp. 1-11).
[23]Confetto, M.G., Covucci, C., Addeo, F. and Normando, M., 2023. Sustainability advocacy antecedents: how social media content influences sustainable behaviours among Generation Z. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *40*(6), pp.758-774.
[24]Sarwatay, D. and Raman, U., 2022. Everyday negotiations in managing presence: Young people and social media in India. *Information, Communication & Society*, *25*(4), pp.536-551.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed in detail the part played by social media in the political perception of the Indian millennials through secondary data. The overall level of social media engagement as well as the specific content and ways of interacting with it are among the predictors of political opinion. Although social media enables participation in politics and the sharing of knowledge, it may lead to the strengthening of political standpoints and the worsening of division.

To support the development of a sound and knowledgeable democracy in India, the problems that arise from fake news and echo chambers concerning social media must be discussed. Further research should be carried out to examine the increasing use of social media in politics as the digital platforms and the users' behaviours are dynamic. Appreciating these dynamics will be important for encouraging the Indian electorate to be better informed and involved.