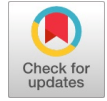


Navigating Global and Local: Reddit's Influence on Community Formation and Identity Among Gen Z Indian Users

Vatsal Tewari, Arpita Mishra



Abstract: *This study explores how Gen Z Indians navigate questions of identity, community, and culture on the global social media platform Reddit. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 15 Indian Redditors aged 18-25, we analyze their experiences through a theoretical framework that brings together key concepts from digital anthropology, postcolonial studies, and science and technology studies. Our findings reveal Reddit as a complex site of cultural negotiation where Indian youth construct hybrid identities, imagine communities beyond geographical boundaries, and grapple with the platform's affordances and limitations. However, we also highlight how these processes of meaning-making and community formation are deeply shaped by the enduring power asymmetries of coloniality and the digital divide in India. The dominance of English on the platform, the marginalization of Indian vernaculars and cultural referents, and the underrepresentation of lower-caste and working-class voices all point to the ways in which Reddit's promise of inclusivity and democratization remains unfulfilled for many Indian users. To make sense of these tensions and contradictions, we develop an analytical approach that foregrounds Indian Redditors' own cultural frameworks and meaning-making practices while also situating their experiences within larger structures of postcolonial power and inequality. This decolonial and pluriversal approach, we argue, is crucial for moving beyond one-size-fits-all models of digital sociality and attending to the irreducible diversity and specificity of Indian digital cultures. At the same time, we reflexively interrogate our own positionality as researchers and the limits of our inquiry, acknowledging the paradoxes of doing decolonial scholarship within a still largely Western-centric academic ecosystem. We thus offer our findings not as definitive conclusions but as an invitation to further conversation and critique, opening up new avenues for research and praxis at the intersections of Indian cultural politics, digital media, and decolonial theory. Ultimately, this study makes a case for the urgent need to decolonize our approaches to global social media platforms like Reddit and to center the lived experiences, cultural knowledges, and political aspirations of digital subjects at the margins. In doing so, we hope to contribute to a more expansive and pluriversal understanding of digital sociality – one that makes space for multiple ways of being and knowing online.*

Keywords: *Reddit, Identity, Digital Communities, Social Media, Gen Z*

Manuscript received on 31 July 2024 | Revised Manuscript received on 08 August 2024 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 September 2024 | Manuscript published on 30 September 2024.

*Correspondence Author(s)

Vatsal Tewari, Centre for The Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Email: vatsal0147@gmail.com, ORCID ID: [0009-0004-6796-213X](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-6796-213X)

Arpita Mishra*, Centre for The Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, Email: arpita39_ssg@jnu.ac.in, ORCID ID: [0009-0001-9795-8164](https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9795-8164)

© The Authors. Published by Lattice Science Publication (LSP). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

I. INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of digital worlds, Reddit stands out as a peculiar platform that facilitates global connections while allowing for the formation of niche communities.

With its structure of user-created and moderated "subreddits," Reddit offers a distinctive environment for users to engage with content, form communities, and express their identities [1]. As of 2022, India ranks among the top countries in terms of Reddit usage, with an estimated 15 million monthly active users, most of them incidentally being Gen Z or Millennials, making it a significant demographic within the platform's user base [2]. The rapid growth of Reddit in India coincides with the country's digital transformation. As of 2021, India had over 600 million internet users [3], with a significant portion of this population being young, urban, and English-speaking -- demographics that align closely with Reddit's user base [4]. This convergence of factors makes the study of Indian Reddit users particularly timely and relevant.

The primary research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do Gen Z Indian users experience community formation on Reddit, and what is the nature of it, both within India-specific subreddits and in global communities?
2. In what ways does participation in Reddit communities influence the identities of Gen Z Indian users?
3. How do Gen Z Indian Redditors navigate the tension between local cultural contexts and the platform's predominantly Western user base?
4. What is the nature of language use on Reddit and what role does it play in community formation and identity expression for Gen Z Indian Reddit users?
5. How do factors such as gender, age, and geographic location influence Gen Z Indian users' experiences on Reddit?
6. What is the role of moderators on Reddit and what is their impact on community formation with respect to Gen Z Indian users?
7. How do Gen Z Indians leverage Reddit to channelize the darker aspects of their identity or self, and to negotiate with socially taboo topics?
8. Do Gen Z Indians present a specific version of their selves on Reddit?

This research aims to explore the complex interplay between Reddit usage, community formation, and cultural identity among Gen Z Indian users.



Navigating Global and Local: Reddit's Influence on Community Formation and Cultural Identity Among Indian Users

By focusing on the experiences of fifteen diverse Gen Z Indian Redditors, we seek to understand how individuals navigate and negotiate their identities within a globally-oriented platform. This study is particularly relevant given India's rapid digitalization and the increasing importance of online spaces in shaping cultural discourse and community dynamics [5]. The unique structure of Reddit, with its diverse subreddits, provides an interesting case study for examining how users from non-Western contexts engage with both global and local digital spaces. As Massanari [1] notes, Reddit's algorithms and community structures can significantly influence user interactions and community formation. This study builds on such insights to explore how these platform-specific features interact with the cultural backgrounds of Indian users. Furthermore, as Arora [5] argues in her work on digital life beyond the West, understanding how non-Western users engage with global platforms is crucial for developing a more comprehensive picture of digital culture. This study contributes to this broader conversation by providing in-depth insights into the experiences of Gen Z Indian Reddit users.

By examining these questions through in-depth interviews with Gen Z Indian Reddit users, this study aims to contribute to our understanding of digital community formation and identity negotiation in an increasingly interconnected world. The findings of this research have implications not only for understanding the Indian digital experience but also for broader discussions about cultural representation, digital colonialism, and the role of social media in shaping modern identities.

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews conducted by a single researcher. This methodological choice allows for consistency in data collection while enabling a deep exploration of participants' lived experiences. The research draws on theoretical frameworks including cultural hybridity, networked individualism, and the concept of "third space" to analyze and interpret the data.

The findings of this study have significant implications for platform designers, policymakers, and educators. By illuminating the complex ways in which Indian users navigate Reddit, this research can inform strategies for creating more inclusive digital spaces, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting digital literacy in diverse cultural contexts.

In the following sections, we will outline the theoretical framework guiding this study, detail our methodology, present our findings, and discuss their implications for both theory and practice in the field of digital sociology and cross-cultural internet studies.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To analyze the experiences of Indian Reddit users, this study draws upon several theoretical perspectives from sociology, anthropology, and media studies. These theories provide a foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of online community formation and identity negotiation in a cross-cultural context.

A. Imagined Communities

Anderson's [6] concept of "imagined communities" provides a useful lens for understanding how Reddit users develop a sense of belonging within subreddits despite never meeting face-to-face. Originally applied to nationalism, this concept can be extended to digital spaces where users construct shared identities and cultural norms. Gruzd et al. [7] have applied this concept to online communities, demonstrating its relevance in understanding how social media users form connections and shared identities. In the context of Reddit, subreddits can be seen as imagined communities where users share common interests, languages, and cultural references, creating a sense of belonging that transcends geographical boundaries.

B. Social Constructionism

Berger and Luckmann's [8] theory of social constructionism helps us understand how reality is constructed through social interactions. On Reddit, this theory can illuminate how users collectively create and maintain the social realities of their subreddit communities through shared language, norms, and practices. The upvoting and downvoting system on Reddit can be seen as a mechanism for negotiating shared meanings and constructing communal knowledge, aligning with the social constructionist perspective. Lindlof and Taylor [13] have further explored how this theory applies to mediated communication, providing insights into how online communities construct their shared realities.

C. Cultural Hybridity

Bhabha's [9] notion of cultural hybridity offers insights into how Indian Reddit users might negotiate their identities at the intersection of local cultural contexts and global digital culture. This concept is particularly relevant for understanding how users navigate between India-specific subreddits and more globally-oriented communities. Kraidy [10] has further developed this concept in the context of global communication, providing a framework for analyzing how individuals in globalized media environments construct hybrid cultural identities. Marwick and Boyd [14] have applied similar concepts to social media, examining how users perform cultural identities across different online platforms.

D. Networked Individualism

Rainie and Wellman's [11] concept of networked individualism describes how digital technologies enable individuals to create personalized networks of relationships. This framework can help explain how Indian users navigate multiple subreddit communities and construct their online identities. Networked individualism suggests that users are not bound to a single community but can belong to multiple, overlapping networks, each serving different social needs. Wellman et al. [15] have further explored how this concept applies to various online platforms, providing a basis for understanding the multi-faceted nature of digital social engagement.

E. Digital Cosmopolitanism

Zuckerman's [12] work on digital cosmopolitanism provides a framework for understanding how engagement with diverse online communities can foster a sense of global citizenship. This perspective is particularly relevant for examining how Indian Reddit users' engagement with global subreddits might influence their worldviews and cultural identities. Gillespie et al. [16][20][21][22][23][24] have expanded on this concept, exploring how digital platforms facilitate cross-cultural encounters and shape users' perceptions of global issues.

F. Postcolonial Digital Cultures

Building on postcolonial theory, scholars like Risam, [17] have examined how digital spaces reflect and reshape power dynamics rooted in colonial histories. This perspective can provide valuable insights into how Indian users experience and navigate a platform with a predominantly Western user base and cultural references. Postcolonial digital culture theory encourages us to consider how global platforms like Reddit may perpetuate or challenge existing power structures and cultural hegemonies.

G. Third Space Theory

Bhabha's [9] concept of the "third space" provides another useful framework for understanding the experiences of Indian Reddit users. The third space is a metaphorical space where cultural translation and negotiation occur, leading to the emergence of new cultural forms. In the context of this study, Reddit itself can be conceptualized as a third space where Indian users engage in cultural translation between their local contexts and global digital culture. Pennycook [18] has applied this concept to language and globalization, offering insights into how users might navigate linguistic and cultural differences on global platforms.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, we can develop a nuanced understanding of how Indian Reddit users navigate community formation and cultural identity in a global digital platform. This theoretical framework guides our analysis of interview data and helps us situate our findings within broader discussions of digital culture and identity.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a qualitative approach centered on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with fifteen Gen Z Indian Reddit users. This method was chosen to gain rich, detailed insights into individual experiences and perceptions of community formation and cultural identity negotiation on Reddit.

A. Participant Selection

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of Reddit usage patterns and demographic characteristics. The criteria for selection included:

1. Indian nationality or strong cultural identification with India

2. Active Reddit usage

The final sample consisted of:

1. 3 females and 12 males

2. Age range: 19-23 years old
3. Geographic diversity: participants from 9 different Indian states.

4. Occupation diversity: students, professionals in IT, academia, self-employed individuals

5. Reddit experience ranging from 1 to 5 years

6. Diversity in subreddit engagement: participants active in various India-specific subreddits (e.g., r/india, r/Chandigarh, r/AITK) and global subreddits

This sample size allows for a comprehensive exploration of experiences across different demographics, user types, and engagement patterns.

B. Data Collection

All interviews were conducted by Vatsal Tewari, a co-author of this study and an MA student in Sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Interviews were conducted via video calls, each lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews followed a semi-structured guide covering key themes such as:

- Initial discovery and adoption of Reddit
- Experiences of community within subreddits
- Negotiation of identity in global and local subreddits
- Perceived impact of Reddit on personal cultural identity and worldview

- Challenges and benefits of navigating between Indian and global communities on Reddit

- Language use and code-switching practices on Reddit

- Relationship with Moderators on Reddit

All interviews were conducted primarily in English, with participants given the option to express themselves in Hindi or their regional language if they felt more comfortable doing so. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and later transcribed using TurboScribe for analysis.

C. Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's [19] six-phase approach. To enhance reliability and mitigate potential biases from having a single interviewer, the following steps were taken:

1. Initial coding was performed independently by Arpita Mishra and Vatsal Tewari.

2. Codes and emerging themes were regularly discussed between the two researchers to ensure agreement and address any discrepancies.

QualCoder software was used to facilitate the coding process and theme development. The analysis process involved:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts

2. Generation of initial codes

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing and refining themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing the report

Navigating Global and Local: Reddit's Influence on Community Formation and Cultural Identity Among Indian Users

D. Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in strict adherence to the American Sociological Association's (ASA) Code of Ethics. While formal Institutional Review Board approval was not required for this study, we ensured that our research methodology and practices aligned with the ASA's ethical guidelines for sociological research.

The study involved interviews with 15 Reddit users. In line with ASA ethical standards, all participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methodology, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews were conducted. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. To protect participant privacy, all identifying information was removed from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms were used in reporting the results. The interviews were conducted in a manner that respected the participants' privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivities.

Data protection measures were implemented to ensure the security of the collected information. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored on password-protected devices, accessible only to the researchers directly involved in the study.

Throughout the research process, we adhered to the ASA's principles of professional competence, integrity, professional and scientific responsibility, respect for people's rights, dignity, and diversity, and social responsibility. These principles guided our approach to ensure that our study contributed meaningful insights while protecting the rights and well-being of our participants.

E. Limitations

While this sample of 15 participants provides a rich and diverse dataset, it is important to note that findings may not be fully generalizable to the entire Gen Z Indian Reddit community. The focus on predominantly English-speaking users may not fully capture experiences of users who primarily engage in regional language subreddits. Additionally, having a single interviewer may introduce potential biases, although steps were taken to mitigate this in the analysis phase. Self-reported data may also be subject to recall bias or social desirability bias. Future research could benefit from incorporating multiple interviewers, content analysis of Reddit posts, or a larger-scale survey to complement these in-depth qualitative insights.

F. Researcher Reflexivity

As the primary interviewer, Vatsal acknowledges that his own experiences as a young Indian man and his academic background in sociology may have influenced the interview process and initial interpretations. To mitigate potential biases, Vatsal engaged in regular reflexive discussions with co-author Arpitai throughout the research process. Both researchers maintained reflexive journals to document their decision-making processes and evolving interpretations.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis of the interview transcripts, viewed through the lens of global theoretical frameworks in dialogue with Indian socio-cultural realities, revealed the complex ways Gen Z Indians engage with Reddit for identity exploration, community formation, and negotiating hybrid cultural belongings. The results illuminate how these users navigate a "third space" between the local and the global, the intimate and the anonymous, within Reddit's affordances and constraints. Anderson's [6] concept of "imagined communities" provides a starting point for understanding how participants developed a sense of belonging within specific subreddits despite never meeting other members face-to-face. Many interviewees described feeling connected to niche interest-based communities, with one user explaining how he felt part of the "universe" of a TV show fan subreddit. This aligns with Gruzd et al.'s [7] application of imagined communities to online spaces. However, extending this framework to the Indian context requires attending to the linguistic diversity and politics of language that shape digital participation in India. The dominance of English on Reddit, as noted by several participants, may limit the ability of non-English-proficient Indians to imagine themselves as part of these communities. Subreddits thus become spaces for enacting what Kothari calls "global Indian" identities, predicated on access to English and associated cultural capital. The social constructionist perspective of Berger and Luckmann [8] further illuminates how subreddits collectively construct and maintain shared realities through unique norms and linguistic practices. But these processes of reality-construction are not neutral - they are inflected by power disparities between Western and Indian cultural referents, with Indian Redditors often having to "translate" themselves and their experiences to fit into platform norms. As one participant noted, "Reddit is not Indian friendly yet", hinting at the ongoing negotiations required to localize this global platform.

Rainie and Wellman's [11] notion of networked individualism offers a useful lens for understanding how Indian Redditors navigate multiple communities and construct their online identities. Participants described belonging to various subreddits serving different facets of their interests and needs, reflecting the multi-modal nature of digital sociality described by Wellman et al. [15]. Bhabha's [9] concept of cultural hybridity aptly captures how participants navigate their identities at the intersection of Indian and Western cultural contexts on Reddit. Many interviewees reported primarily engaging with global, English-language subreddits while selectively participating in India-specific communities. This reflects the kind of hybrid cultural identities that Kraidy describes in globalized media environments. However, this hybridity is not without tensions. Engagement with global subreddits exposed participants to stereotypes and othering of Indians, as exemplified by Dev's experience of being called derogatory names.



Nandy's idea of the "intimate enemy" is instructive here - the Western cultural codes that Indian Redditors must navigate are both familiar and alienating, desirable and threatening. Participants' experiences of casual racism on the platform reveal the persistence of colonial power relations even in supposedly "borderless" digital spaces.

At the same time, the emergence of vernacular subreddits like r/IndiaSpeaks and r/Chodi point to efforts by Indian users to carve out their own cultural niches within Reddit's global architecture. These "Indic Reddits" can be seen as attempts to resist cultural homogenization and assert local identities, even as they adapt to the platform's overarching logics. Examining the interplay between such local subreddits and the wider Indian digital ecosystem could yield further insights into the complex cultural politics of Reddit in India. Reddit's anonymity emerged as a key factor shaping Indian users' self-expression and community formation on the platform. Many participants valued the pseudonymity afforded by Reddit for enabling more candid discussions of sensitive topics, resonating with Marwick and Boyd's [14] arguments about how platform architectures shape identity performances.

However, this anonymity also engendered tensions and ambivalences. While some participants found the lack of visible identity markers liberating, others noted how it made it difficult to establish trust and credibility with strangers online. As an interviewee put it, "You never know who you're talking to and who the people are." This points to the limits of purely anonymous sociality and the enduring importance of social cues and cultural context, even in pseudonymous spaces.

The figure of the "stranger" - encountered intimately yet remaining unknowable - is a productive metaphor for theorizing Indian Redditors' experiences of anonymity. Drawing on Simmel's classic insights, we can understand these pseudonymous interactions as a form of "stranger sociability" characterized by a mix of proximity and distance, curiosity and caution. Engaging with strangers on Reddit allows for novel forms of self-fashioning and cultural encounter, but also carries risks and uncertainties that participants must constantly negotiate.

Issues of digital inequality and representation emerged as major barriers to realizing Reddit's potential as an inclusive space for Indian voices. Participants consistently noted the dominance of urban, English-educated, and middle/upper-class demographics on Indian subreddits, with one participant observing "I haven't seen people from certain communities, certain classes." This skew reflects India's wider digital divides along lines of language, class, and region. However, these digital inequalities cannot be understood in purely socioeconomic terms - they are also fundamentally linked to India's postcolonial condition and the uneven distribution of cultural and linguistic capital. The hegemony of English on Reddit, the valorization of Western cultural referents, and the marginalization of Indian vernaculars all reproduce and reinscribe colonial hierarchies in digital form. Decolonizing Reddit, then, would require not just expanding access to the platform but also actively de-centering its Anglocentric norms and genres. One potential decolonial approach is to foreground Indian Redditors' own meaning-making practices and interpretive frameworks, rather than solely viewing them through the lens of Western theory.

For instance, several participants invoked local cultural tropes like jugaad (creative improvisation) and apna time aayega (our time will come) to describe their aspirations and workarounds on the platform. Attending closely to such emic categories and theorizations can help provincialize universalizing accounts of digital culture and identity. More radically, we might imagine what a "desi Reddit" could look like - a homegrown platform that centers Indian languages, aesthetics, and modes of sociality while fostering the same pseudonymous exchange of ideas. Such vernacular platforms are already emerging in spaces pointing to alternative possible futures for Indian digital cultures beyond Silicon Valley templates. Studying these "Indic Internets" alongside global giants like Reddit can help pluralize our understanding of digital sociality beyond a one-size-fits-all model.

However, Reddit is just one node in the larger network of platforms and online communities that Indian youth engage with [20]. Several participants compared their experiences on Reddit with more widely-used apps like WhatsApp and YouTube, noting the more niche and specialized nature of Reddit communities. Understanding Indian Redditors' practices thus requires situating Reddit within this broader digital ecosystem and attending to potential overlaps and user flows with other online spaces. For instance, examining parallels between Reddit and other interest-based Indian online communities on platforms like Discord and Telegram could illuminate the wider cultural circuits through which young Indians explore their identities and passions. Such cross-platform analysis could also shed light on the specific affordances and limitations of Reddit for Indian users compared to these other networked contexts.

V. CONCLUSION

Our analysis of Gen Z Indian Redditors' experiences, drawing on a synthesis of global theoretical frameworks and local socio-cultural perspectives, highlights the complex negotiations of identity, community, and culture that unfold on the platform. Reddit emerges as a contested digital space where Indian youth construct hybrid selves, imagine communities beyond geographical boundaries, and navigate the affordances and limitations of pseudonymous sociality. However, this study also underscores the profound inequalities and postcolonial power dynamics that shape Indian users' engagement with Reddit. The platform's English-language dominance, the hegemony of Western cultural referents, and the underrepresentation of marginalized Indian voices all point to the enduring coloniality of power in digital space. Realizing Reddit's potential as an inclusive and empowering forum for Indian youth thus requires a critical reckoning with these structural barriers and a commitment to decolonizing both the platform's design and the epistemological frameworks we use to make sense of it.

Toward this end, we have tried to foreground Indian Redditors' own meaning-making practices and cultural lenses, while also reflexively interrogating our own positionality as researchers.



Navigating Global and Local: Reddit's Influence on Community Formation and Cultural Identity Among Indian Users

We have situated Reddit within the wider ecosystem of Indian digital platforms and imagined alternative "Indic Internets" that center local languages, aesthetics, and values. Such a decolonial approach, we argue, is essential for moving beyond a one-size-fits-all model of digital sociality and attending to the irreducible diversity of Indian digital cultures.

At the same time, we recognize the limitations of our study and the need for further research to build on and complicate our findings. Future work could examine in greater depth the role of specific Indian regions, languages, and cultural identities in shaping Reddit experiences, as well as the flow of influences and interactions between Reddit and other Indian online communities. Comparative studies of Indian diasporic users' engagement with the platform could also yield insights into how hybrid digital identities are negotiated across transnational contexts. Methodologically, we see potential in more participatory and collaborative research designs that involve Indian Redditors as co-creators of knowledge rather than mere objects of study.

Ultimately, this study is an invitation to think beyond false binaries of global and local, dominant and resistant, online and offline in our approach to Indian digital cultures. It points to the need for more situated, context-sensitive, and pluralistic understandings of platforms like Reddit – understandings that attend to the specific histories, politics, and aspirations of the communities that use them. By centering Indian Redditors' lived experiences and cultural frameworks, we hope to contribute to a more inclusive and decolonial vision of digital sociality – one that makes space for multiple ways of being and knowing online. At the same time, we are mindful of the tensions and contradictions inherent in studying a global platform like Reddit from a decolonial lens. Even as we critique Reddit's Western-centrism and imagine "Indic alternatives," we are working within an academic genre and publishing infrastructure that is itself deeply shaped by colonial legacies. There is a risk of reproducing extractive logics even as we try to disrupt them, of speaking for rather than with Indian digital subjects. Grappling with these paradoxes is an ongoing process that requires vigilance, humility, and a willingness to be transformed by the encounters and collisions between different worlds - digital and physical, Indian and Western, dominant and subaltern.

In the end, our hope is that this study sparks further conversation and reflection on what it means to study digital cultures from the margins, and what a truly decolonized and pluriversal approach to global platforms might look like. We offer our findings not as the final word but as an opening – an invitation to think and imagine otherwise. For it is in these critical, uncomfortable, and generative spaces of questioning that new possibilities for Indian digital selves and societies might yet emerge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the limited use of Anthropic's Claude AI for the purposes of brainstorming, writing, refining and proofreading our manuscript.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

After aggregating input from all authors, I must verify the accuracy of the following information as the article's author.

- **Conflicts of Interest/ Competing Interests:** Based on my understanding, this article has no conflicts of interest.
- **Funding Support:** This article has not been funded by any organizations or agencies. This independence ensures that the research is conducted with objectivity and without any external influence.
- **Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate:** This study was conducted in strict adherence to the American Sociological Association's (ASA) Code of Ethics. While formal Institutional Review Board approval was not required for this study, we ensured that our research methodology and practices aligned with the ASA's ethical guidelines for sociological research. The study involved interviews with 20 Reddit users. In line with ASA ethical standards, all participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methodology, and their rights as participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before the interviews were conducted. Participants were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. To protect participant privacy, all identifying information was removed from the interview transcripts, and pseudonyms were used in reporting the results. The interviews were conducted in a manner that respected the participants' privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivities. Data protection measures were implemented to ensure the security of the collected information. Interview recordings and transcripts were stored on password-protected devices, accessible only to the researchers directly involved in the study. Throughout the research process, we adhered to the ASA's principles of professional competence, integrity, professional and scientific responsibility, respect for people's rights, dignity, and diversity, and social responsibility. These principles guided our approach to ensure that our study contributed meaningful insights while protecting the rights and well-being of our participants.
- **Data Access Statement and Material Availability:** Yes, it is relevant. The primary data for this study consists of interview transcripts from conversations with Indian Reddit users. Due to the sensitive and personal nature of the information shared by participants, and to protect their privacy and anonymity, the full transcripts are not publicly available. However, anonymized excerpts from the interviews are included in the findings section of this article to support the analysis and conclusions. Researchers interested in accessing the anonymized interview data for verification or further analysis may contact the author with a formal request detailing the intended use of the data.

Access will be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to approval and the signing of a data sharing agreement to ensure the continued protection of participant privacy. The literature and publicly available data used in this study, including Reddit user statistics and internet usage data for India, are cited in the references section and can be accessed through their original sources. No additional datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

- **Authors Contributions:** Vatsal conducted the 15 interviews for the article and Arpita helped edit it. Both authors contributed to the conceptualization of the study, data analysis, and manuscript revision. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

REFERENCES

1. Massanari, A. (2017). "#Gamergate and The Fapping: How Reddit's algorithm, governance, and culture support toxic technocultures." *New Media & Society*, 19(3), 329-346. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815608807>
2. Statista. (2022). "Countries with the most Reddit users 2022." Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1174696/reddit-user-by-country>
3. IAMA and Kantar. (2021). "Internet Adoption in India ICUBE 2020." Internet and Mobile Association of India.
4. Patel, R. (2019). "Young India and Digital Media: A Survey Report." Centre for Culture, Media & Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia.
5. Arora, P. (2019). "The next billion users: Digital life beyond the West." Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674238879>
6. Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.
7. Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., & Takhteyev, Y. (2011). Imagining Twitter as an imagined community. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(10), 1294-1318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764211409378>
8. Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin UK.
9. Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.
10. Kraidy, M. M. (2005). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Temple University Press. https://doi.org/10.26530/OAPEN_626979
11. Rainie, H., & Wellman, B. (2012). *Networked: The new social operating system*. MIT Press. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/8358.001.0001>
12. Zuckerman, E. (2013). *Digital cosmopolitans: Why we think the internet connects us, why it doesn't, and how to rewire it*. W. W. Norton & Company.
13. Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage Publications.
14. Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, 13(1), 114-133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>
15. Wellman, B., Quan-Haase, A., Boase, J., Chen, W., Hampton, K., Diaz, I., & Miyata, K. (2003). The social affordances of the Internet for networked individualism. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 8(3), JCMC834. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2003.tb00216.x>
16. Gillespie, M., Osseiran, S., & Cheesman, M. (2018). Syrian refugees and the digital passage to Europe: Smartphone infrastructures and affordances. *Social Media + Society*, 4(1), 2056305118764440. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118764440>
17. Risam, R. (2018). *New digital worlds: Postcolonial digital humanities in theory, praxis, and pedagogy*. Northwestern University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv7tq4hg>
18. Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203088807>
19. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
20. Srivastava, A., & Saxena, Dr. U. K. (2023). Digital Media and Media literacy. An Analysis of the Contribution and Effect of social media in Media Literacy. In *Indian Journal of Mass Communication and Journalism* (Vol. 3, Issue 1, pp. 17-22). <https://doi.org/10.54105/ijmcj.a1051.093123>
21. P. Uma Rani, Padmalosani, Impact of Social Media on Youth. (2019). In *International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering* (Vol. 8, Issue 11S, pp. 786-787). <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijitee.k1138.09811s19>

22. Pancham, A., Sharma, D., Sharma, V., & Patil, H. (2020). Implementing System for Rating Generation by Analysis of Social Media. In *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* (Vol. 9, Issue 3, pp. 638-643). <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijeat.c5330.029320>
23. B., P. V., & Kundan M, P. (2020). How Social Media users' Drive Influences Purchase Intention in Indian Fashion Industry. In *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering (IJRTE)* (Vol. 8, Issue 6, pp. 5153-5160). <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.f9944.038620>
24. Joshi, S. C., Gupta, K., & Manektala, S. (2022). Misinformation, Public Opinion, and the Role of Critical Thinking. In *International Journal of Management and Humanities* (Vol. 8, Issue 9, pp. 15-18). <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijmh.i1483.058922>

AUTHORS PROFILE



Vatsal Tewari is an emerging scholar in the field of sociology, currently pursuing his MA at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Vatsal's research interests span a wide range of sociological topics, including Digital Sociology and Urban Sociology, reflecting his keen awareness of contemporary issues and their sociological implications. His work on sustainable urban transportation, presented at the Anusandhan conference at IIT Mandi, demonstrates his ability to apply sociological perspectives to pressing urban challenges.



Arpita Mishra is a promising young sociologist and researcher currently pursuing her MA in Sociology at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. Her academic interests lie at the intersection of gender, sexuality, and family studies, with a particular focus on evolving notions of intimacy in contemporary Indian society.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the Lattice Science Publication (LSP)/ journal and/ or the editor(s). The Lattice Science Publication (LSP)/ journal and/ or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.