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A Study Of Social Media Usage, Preferences, And Engagement Among Indian "Generation Z" Users.

Predicting features and functions in a next-gen social media app, based on actual Gen-Z preferences and frustrations

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Abstract

The research examines the effect of social media on Indian youth's daily life with a special focus on usage habits, likes and participation behavior. The data were gathered from respondents mainly in their 15–25 age bracket with a few younger and older respondents. Questions related to demographics, level of usage, site favorites, privacy perspectives and style of interaction were asked. Findings showed that Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube were the most used daily apps. However, preferred feature combinations revealed 29 patterns of behavior reflecting the heterogeneity of user intentions. Respondents indicated that the primary reasons for social media use were entertainment, networking, and education. However, they also acknowledged some frustrations such as overselling, algorithmic biasness, and platform congestion. Young people made suggestions for new features that would improve customizability, increase privacy control, and reduce distraction. Notably, content format preferences became evident as the highest interaction was recorded on short videos, reels, and other interactive elements rather than traditional text-based updates. These findings are pivotal for platform design, digital well-being, and influencer marketing strategies.

Keywords: Generation Z or GenZ, Social Media, Instagram, Whatsapp, Youtube, Snapchat, Social media usage, Influencers, content.

1 Introduction: The age of 'over communication':

The advent of social media has deeply reorganized the manner in which youth live, interact with digital spaces, and socialize (Subrahmanyam, K., & Šmahel, D., 2011). In the Indian scenario, this reorganization has been hastened by the widespread reach of low-cost smartphones, lower data costs on the internet, and increased digital know-how among the youth (Yadav, M., & Dube, S., 2025).. Platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Snapchat are no longer mere channels of entertainment but also central arenas for self-expression, peer-to-peer interaction, and extension into wider communities, including creators and influencers (Disha, M., & Bhavika P., 2024) Social media has now become a kind of parallel cultural space, influencing young people's identities, ambitions, and even conceptions of privacy and well-being (Bharucha, J., 2018).

Despite the presence of Social media in all aspects of daily life, its use does not follow uniform patterns; instead, significant variations can be seen across age groups, individual preferences, and purposes of engagement (India Today, 2023). The level of interaction, platform selectivity, and use motivations differ considerably among users. Few of the interviewed youth use social media mainly for communication and connection, whereas others are attracted to entertainment, trends, and influencer content. With all its advantages, however, issues like algorithmic manipulation, too much advertising, platform overcrowding, and privacy concerns remain at the forefront in defining young people's interactions with these sites. Examining these varied patterns is thus essential to comprehend not just the digital behavior of young Indians but also the possibilities and implications arising from social media landscapes (Khanganbi, T. V., & Priya, M., 2025).

This research relies on feedback from 158 respondents gathered through a standardized questionnaire. Most of the participants were in the age bracket of 15–25, followed by late adolescents and a few outliers above the age of 25. The gender distribution included 96 males, 61 female respondents. Self-reported daily use was high: whereas 25% participants reported 1–2 hours of use the extreme use of over 6 hours daily is reported by 10% of users. 31% of users admitted to have used social media immediately after waking up and 37% of respondents confirmed to have open social media multiple times in a day to check the engagement. These statistics illustrate the extent to which social media penetrated the daily life of young Indians.

Respondents also offered comments on posting behavior, use frequency of apps, dependence on algorithmic suggestions, privacy issues, and annoyances with existing platforms. Most impactful were the questions that probed favorite features, innovative suggestions for new features, frustrating experiences with current apps, and most engaging formats of content. Particularly, short videos like Reels and Shorts emerged as particularly compelling, highlighting the growing prevalence of brief, visually engaging content in directing youth attention.

2 Rationale of the Study:

While there is research on young people's use of social media across the world, much of this remains fixed in Western contexts, and Indian youth remain relatively under researched given their speed of uptake across digital platforms. India boasts one of the world's highest proportions of young people, making it a site of utmost importance to consider how social media influences behavior, aspirations, and day-to-day life. In addition, the majority of existing research explores either the positive potential of social media (e.g., connectedness and education) or its negative effects (e.g., addiction and distraction), and fails to acknowledge the complex balance of motivations, frustrations, and creative expectations from users themselves.

This research fills that gap by taking a holistic perspective on social media in daily life among Indian youth, including not only their usage patterns but also their site preferences for features, irritations with existing sites, and hopes for new features. By bringing behavioral and attitudinal factors together, the research provides insights that are relevant to scholars of digital culture, policymakers interested in the well-being of young people, and technology developers who aim to create more responsive, user-centric, and responsible platforms.

3 Literature Review:

Every day we produce quintillions of bytes of data, the data centers across the world are doubling in capacity and the recent rise of Larry Ellison, the co-founder of Oracle in a single day Stock rally gaining him over a hundred billion in net-worth overnight talks about the underlining fact that the data boom here to stay.

The sudden jump in data generation is attributed to the fact that more than half of our web searches are now been conducted on mobile devices (Marr, B. 2018). Also the ubiquitous nature and technological developments that makes smartphone as de-facto searching, clicking, calculating, connecting and lifelogging device (Sakib, M. N., et. al, 2022). The smartphone integrates enormous capturing and computing capabilities in a single jacket, a rich set of sensors, which provide unique opportunities for capturing contents and contextual information into a comprehensive lifelog archive. (Gurrin, C. et. al., 2013).

As of early 2024, there were approximately 659 million smartphone users in India. The internet penetration rate was around 52.4% of the total population. (https://en.wikipedia.org) Out of the total population, GenZ has a very high rate of mobile phone usage. One report from early 2025 indicated that about 97.1% of people in this age group had used a mobile phone (including smartphones) in the previous three months. (ASER, 2024).

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024, which surveyed nearly 6.5 lakh children in rural India, provides a detailed portrait of the adolescent user. The findings show a high level of digital literacy, with 82.2% of children aged 14 to 16 reporting that they know how to use a smartphone, with a large percentage using them for social media (76%) and educational purposes (57%) (ASER, 2024).

In 21st century, social media have intruded people's everyday life with incredible speed to turn out to be one of the most significant means of communication through technology (Arli, D. (2017). Social media have infiltrated people's daily life with amazing rapidity to become one of the most important social platforms for computer-mediated communication (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

In today's era, the popularity of social media has increased significantly. Billions of users worldwide are using social media (Laudon & Traver, 2016). The explanation of widespread use of social media can be related to the outcome of two groundbreaking studies apart from many other factors. First is social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954)—how and why people compare themselves to others (Zlatan, K. 2018) and second are the researches on parasocial relationships (Donald, H. & R. Richard Wohl. 1956) (i.e. one-sided relationships where a person knows quite a bit about a media persona or influencer, but not vice versa) shows that audiences become interested in influencers' lives. People follow what they do, how they act, what they post—because to them, those lives seem relevant for modeling, inspiration, or simply for entertainment (Su, B.-C. et. al., 2021).

Many empirical studies have shown that social networking platforms increase people's awareness and interest in the lives of others—a friend, acquaintance, or even strangers. For instance, the Pew Research Center's report *"Social Networking Sites and Our Lives"* finds that people use SNS to keep up with friends, family, and public figures; monitor life events (e.g. marriages, relocations, achievements); and compare their own lives to what others share. This usage illustrates a natural curiosity about others' lives. (Tom, R. et. al., 2011). This may also lead to stress as in this digital age, cyberbullying has gradually become a serious social problem all over the world, especially among adolescents. (Xiao-Wei Chu et. al. 2018) Furthermore, a report suggests that more than 50% of social media users follow brands on social media (Van, B., Eenhuizen, & Veris, 2011). While many studies have found the positive impact of social media on marketing activities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006; Hausman & Siekpe, 2008).

Gen Z used social media significantly more than Gen Y for **education, entertainment, shopping, and socialization** (Mude, G., & Undale, S., 2023), some youths spend over 6 hours daily on social media (India Today, 2023), In a study of young adults (18-24 years) in urban, semi-urban, and rural India, significant differences were found in platform usage, frequency, and purpose across residential areas. Also, while some used social media primarily for communication, others used it for education, information, or entertainment. (Khanganbi, Thongam Victory; Priya, M. 2025).

Anyone born from 1997 onward till mid 2010s are part of GenZ (Dimock, 2018). GenZ are also called the "*digital natives*" (term coined by Mark Prensky in 2001) because this generation speaks the language of computers, internet, phones and videogames with ease, unlike millennial, they had smartphones in their cradle singing lullabies for them, and they are used to navigating on these freely. GenZ are also identified as good in multi-tasking with shortest attention span, they do not read manual to know how devices work but figure out on their own (Serbanescu, A., 2022). they are living in "Onlife" era, the onlife manifesto (Floridi, 2015) life is a continuous hybridization between online and offline for smartphone users.

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, & Halonen, 2008). Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan, & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, social media is available on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content. It introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities and individuals (Kietzmann, & Hermkens, 2011).

Various functions performed by different techniques and tools used by media are social networking, web publishing, virtual reality, creating virtual relationships, Interpersonal and community interaction, sharing of text, sounds and AVs, Gaming etc. With the advent of AI technology more features and sophisticated tools are being added. Booming economy, rapid expansion in country's middle class, inexpensive technology, telecom expansion and internet reach up to remote areas has created a boom in the usage of various social media platforms (Economics Times and IAMAI, by 2025). Between 2021 and 2024, internet penetration in rural India grew from 59% to 78%, compared to urban growth from 77% to 90% (Moneycontrol.com Aug 2025). According to the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, a 10% increase in internet subscribers corresponds to a 3.2% rise in state per capita GDP and a 10% increase in mobile Internet traffic, underlining the economic multiplier effect of connectivity. (Wikipedia 2025) The frequency of checking social media updates in a day has skyrocketed. (Deloitte 2015 mobile survey). In this digital age, cyberbullying has gradually become a serious social problem all over the world, especially among adolescents. (Xiao-Wei Chu et. al. 2018).

In the nutshell, Affordable smartphones and data plans have lowered barriers to entry, telecom expansion into rural and remote areas has enabled millions to access the Internet and These gains in technology and connectivity are powering both economic development (via GDP growth and middle-class expansion) and social media adoption on a large scale.

4 Research Methodology:

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, descriptive, and exploratory design to investigate the social media usage behavior of Generation Z (ages 14–24, with a few outliers). The purpose is twofold: (a) to understand the psychological, behavioral, and functional drivers of social media usage, and (b) to derive insights useful for both designing new social media applications and improving existing platforms.

4.1.1 **Population and Sampling:** The target population consisted of youth social media users in India**,** representing diverse educational and social backgrounds. Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms.

4.1.2 **Sampling method:** A simple random sampling within GenZs cluster.

4.1.3 **Sample size:** 157 valid responses were retained after cleaning for missing/inconsistent data.

4.1.4 **Instrument and Measures:** The questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Multiple-response items were carefully recoded to minimize redundancy.

4.1.5 **Master codebook** was created to ensure consistency across data entry and analysis. Responses were coded using nominal, ordinal, or scale levels of measurement based on the nature of each variable.

4.2 Data Processing

Data were cleaned for out-of-range codes and duplicates. Open-ended responses were grouped into thematic categories. Multiple-response items were recoded into either dummy variables (0/1) or collapsed categories where frequencies were too low. The final dataset was prepared in SPSS (.sav format), with 30+ variables spanning demographics, usage, perceptions, and behaviors and the analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 29.

4.3 Data Analysis

The analytical plan involved two stages: **Descriptive & Exploratory Analysis:** Frequencies and percentages for categorical variables, Means, medians, and standard deviations for scale variables. **Inferential statistics:** Regression predicting outcomes such as *number of applications downloaded by Gender*

This combination of descriptive, exploratory, and inferential analysis ensures a comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's social media usage, frustrations, and expectations, while directly linking insights to implications for new app design and platform improvement.

5 Analytical Findings:

5.1 Demographic

5.1.1 Gender:- Out of the 157 respondents, 96 (61.1%) were male and 61 (38.9%) were female, indicating a noticeable male majority with roughly a 3:2 ratio.

5.1.2 **Age:-** Mean of age is 17 and std. deviation is 1.62 after cleaning the data and removing the two outliers respondents of 29 and 30 years each.

5.2 Behavioral

5.2.1 **Check Social media immediately after waking up (Deloitte, 2015):-** 31.2% respondents check social media as first thing in the morning whereas another (31.2%) sometimes check in the morning, and remaining (37.6%) said no. This shows that while a significant portion of respondents (nearly two-thirds) do check or occasionally check social media right after waking up.

5.2.2 **How many times GenZs open & check social media accounts daily (Drouin, M., et al. (2018):-** A Study conducted by Anderson and Jiang (2018) which suggested that roughly 9 out of 10 teens go on internet several times in a day. Drouin, M. also had the same question in his research. Our data is also showing 86.6% respondents checks their social media more than 4 times in a day. Mean is 9.43 and Std. deviation is 5.56.

5.2.3 **Daily usage by number of hours (Pew Research Center, 2023):-** GenZ spend more time on their phones each day than any other devices combined (Gwi, 2018). In our data 79.6% respondents confirmed to use Social media for 2 to 5 hours in a day. Our mean of usage hours is 3.65 hours with std. deviation of 1.75.

5.2.4 **Total applications installed on an average GenZ smartphone (Amy M S. et. al., 2022):-** 97.5% respondents are using up-to 6 applications out of these 9.6% uses only a single app and 88% uses 2-6 applications. Mean of total number of application is 3.3 and std. deviation is 1.525.

5.2.5 **Frequency of posting on social media (Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K. 2016):-** Majority of respondents are passive users, with most posting rarely or not at all, while a smaller but notable segment posts frequently. 8.3% post daily, 35% post often, 45.2% post rarely and 11.5% do not post anything on social media.

5.3 Platform Preferences

5.3.1 **Favorite Social Media Application (Piper Sandler, 2024):-** A Strong dominance of visual and content-driven platforms is seen, particularly Instagram and YouTube, suggesting that users prefer visually engaging, interactive, and entertainment-oriented experiences. (See Fig 5.3.1)

5.3.2 **Favorite applications they have downloaded (Pew Research Center, 2021):-** Among GenZs, Instagram is most popular with 87% respondents confirmed to have insta in their mobile, 79% confirmed to have Whatsapp, 71% have Youtube, 46% have Snapchat. Facebook, surprisingly has lowest acceptability among GenZs, installed by only 6% users. (See Fig 5.3.2)

5.3.3 **Reason for installing any social media application (Mude, G., & Undale, S., 2023):-** 38.2% respondents cited entertainment, awareness, or fun, making it the most common reason for installing the application. This was followed by 31.8% respondents opting education, creativity, or content creation, and 29.97 respondents installed for networking.

5.3.4 **How they primarily use social media (Quan-Haase, A., & Young, A. L., 2010):-** Top two reasons for their contribution to social media are Entertainment and Learning. Our data shows 82% GenZs have installed social media for entertainment, 91% for messaging/Networking and 75% for education/Inspiration. Good 29% uses it for Shopping and Business. (See fig 5.3.4)

5.3.5 **The Social media application and its main feature that attracts them (Denti, L., et al., 2023):-** The open ended responses are treated with dropping categories where frequencies was very low and clubbing the rest into below five main categories. (See table 5.3.5)

5.3.6 **Most preferred feature (Dhir, A., Yossatorn, Y., Kaur, P., & Chen, S., 2018):-** The GenZs spend most of their time on short-form video content such as Reels or Shorts. (See fig 5.3.6)

5.3.7 **Desired new features (Lee, E., & Chae, Y.-G., 2017):-** Users suggested several improvements for social media applications in an open ended question, later we summarized the responses in seven main areas of improvement with specific responses recorded for future use the categorized responses. (See table 5.3.7)

5.4 Attitudes & perceptions

5.4.1 **Privacy and Safety (Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d., 2014):-** Privacy is a major concern for the respondents, with 67.5% considering it extremely important. An additional (18.5%) rated it as somewhat important, while 8.9% respondents felt it was not very important, and 5.1% respondents indicated it doesn't matter.

5.4.2 **Ever Deleted or Paused Social Media (Anderson, M., & Jiang, J., 2018):-** Large majority of respondents, (72.6%), have at some point deleted or paused their social media use, while (27.4%) have never done so.

5.4.3 **Reasons for deleting/pausing social media (Dhir, A., Yossatorn, Y., Kaur, P., & Chen, S., 2018):-** Respondents cited various reasons for deleting or pausing their social media use. The most common reason was academics, studies, or exams, with 27.4% respondents selecting this, followed by reducing non-academic distractions (14.0%).

5.4.4 **Frustrations (Gillespie, T., 2018):-** The primary frustrations reported by respondents on social media were overwhelmingly related to negative content and social issues, with 118 respondents (75.2%) citing this as their main concern. (See fig 5.4.4)

5.4.5 **Dislikes (Statistica Research, 2023):-** Respondents also shared their views on which features they would like to change in social media applications through open ended question and that is summarized in six major factors.

5.4.6 **Overcrowded platform (Meena & Kumar, 2021):-** Respondents were asked which social media platforms feel overcrowded to them. The majority, 93 respondents (59.2%), felt Instagram is too crowded, followed by Facebook with 34 respondents (21.7%), Snapchat with 15 respondents (9.6%).

5.4.7 **Willingness to switch their current platform for new platform (Hunter & Taylor, 2020):-** A very high percentage (around 65%) of users are ready to switch (29.3% Definitely and 35% probably) whereas 14% are not remaining 22% are not sure.

5.5 Engagement style

5.5.1 **Consumers or Creators (Burgess & Green, 2018):-** Our data results shows that 29.9% of GenZs only consume data online, 35.7% mostly consume, 28.7% said they balance their time in consuming and creating whereas very small percentage of 3.8% said they mostly create and just 1.9% only create content for social media.

5.5.2 **How they discover new content or creator (Gillespie, T., 2018):-** Most respondents (38.9%) discover content or creators through algorithmic recommendations. (See Fig 5.2.2)

5.5.3 **Whose content they engage / interact with (Abidin, C., 2016):-** 56.7% primarily interact with professional accounts, creators, influencers, or celebrities, while 43.3% engage more with individuals they know personally. This indicates that while personal connections remain important, users show a stronger preference for engaging with public figures and content creators.

5.5.4 **Who they follow (Known or Unknown/Celebrity) (Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O., 2019):-** A majority of respondents, 51.6%, primarily follow people they personally know on social media, while 30.6% maintain a balanced approach by following both known individuals and unknown creators. A smaller group 17.8% focus mainly on following unknown influencers or celebrities.

5.5.5 **Source of Content they receive (Abidin, C., 2016):-** 65.0% prefer a mix of algorithm-suggested content and posts from people they know, making it the most common preference. A smaller group of GenZs, 18.5%, enjoy content solely from people they know, while 16.6%, rely exclusively on algorithm-suggested content.

5.5.6 **Favorite engagement activity (Sheldon, P., & Bryant, K., 2016):-** overwhelmingly high percentage of users are stick to short form videos and reels (37%) whereas a small percentage engage in comments, discussions and threads (5%) (See table 5.5.6)

5.5.7 **Engage in debates, discussions, Forums, Comments and responding to trolls (Chen, W., & Lee,** K.-H., 2013):- When asked about their participation in debates, comments, discussions, or trolling on social media, 33.1% reported that they rarely engage, 29.9% engage sometimes, 12.7% engage often, and 24.2% never participate in such activities.

5.5.8 **Edit photos/Videos before posting (Chua, T. H. H., & Chang, L., 2016):-** When asked whether they edit photos before posting on social media, 51.6% said yes, while 48.4% said no.

5.6 Inferential Statistics

To assess whether gender influences the number of social media applications installed, we applied three complementary statistical approaches. A linear regression analysis revealed that gender significantly predicted app count, with females installing fewer apps than males. This finding was supported by an independent samples t-test, and finally A nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test confirmed the robustness of this effect without assuming equal variances, indicating that males had higher app counts.

5.6.1 Regression Analysis

1. A simple linear regression was conducted to examine whether gender predicted the number of social media applications installed on participants' smartphones.

- Model fit:
  - R=.226, R^2 = .051 → Gender explains ~5.1% of variance in apps installed.
  - F(1,155)=8.32, p=.004F(1, 155) = 8.32, p=.004 → Model is significant.
  - Coefficients Constant = 4.28
  - Gender (coded 1 = Male, 2 = Female): B= −0.704, SE=0.244, t=−2.885, p=.004.
  - Interpretation: Moving from male → female predicts ~0.7 fewer apps installed compared to males. Specifically, moving from male to female was associated with a decrease of about 0.7 apps on average.

5.6.2 Independent Samples t-test

To cross-validate this finding, an independent samples t-test was performed comparing the mean number of apps installed by males and females.

- Descriptives:
  - Males (n = 96): M = 3.57 apps, SD = 1.68
  - Females (n = 61): M = 2.87 apps, SD = 1.12
- Levene's Test: F=6.56, p=.011 → variances unequal.
- t-test (equal variances not assumed):
  - t(154.7)=3.15, p=.002.
  - Mean difference = 0.704 apps.
  - 95% CI [0.262, 1.146].
  - Cohen's d ≈ 0.47 (medium effect).

- Results indicated that males (M = 3.57, SD = 1.68) had significantly more apps installed than females (M = 2.87, SD = 1.12), t(154.7)=3.15, p=.002, with a medium effect size (d=0.47). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference [0.26, 1.15] confirmed that the difference was unlikely to be due to sampling error.

5.6.3 Mann–Whitney U test

A Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to examine gender differences in the number of social media applications installed.

- Groups compared:
  - Males (n = 96, Mean Rank = 86.07, Sum of Ranks = 8263)
  - Females (n = 61, Mean Rank = 67.87, Sum of Ranks = 4140)
- Test statistics:
  - U=2249.00
  - Z=−2.518
  - p=.012 (two-tailed)
- Effect size (r): r=ZN=−2.518157≈−0.20

  r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}} = \frac{-2.518}{\sqrt{157}} \approx -0.20r=NZ=157−2.518≈−0.20 → Small-to-medium effect size.

The Mann–Whitney test confirms that the distribution of the number of apps installed differs significantly between genders. Specifically, males tend to have more apps installed (higher mean rank = 86.07) compared to females (mean rank = 67.87). The effect size (r ≈ .20) suggests a modest but non-trivial difference.

Taken together, both regression and t-test analyses converged on the conclusion that gender is a significant predictor of the number of social media applications installed. Males, on average, maintain a broader range of installed apps compared to females, though gender alone accounts for a modest proportion of the variance, suggesting that additional psychological and behavioral factors likely contribute to app adoption patterns.

6 Conclusion:

This paper aimed to identify elements a new and emerging social media platform should carry to cater to Gen Z. The research clearly demonstrates that Gen Z are approximately four hours engaged on social media daily, which is considerable and on the rise. On the other hand, temporary disengagement or breaks from social media is common, most likely due to need to regulate screen time, prioritize mental health, manage content overload or study. For a new social media platform, incorporating features that support healthier usage such as a record of user activity, reminders to take a break, content moderation or personalization, would act to improve user satisfaction and loyalty over time. The motivations for installing social-media applications stem from entertainment, education and networking. For a social media application, building out features which support all three factors - fun content to consume, the opportunity to socialize with others and learn - would appropriately cater to most patterns of user behavior. While platforms that are considered highly meaningful, particularly Instagram, are perceived by users as being saturated, which may offer an opportunity to develop a space with more personalized content and an abundance of space for users to commune.

Many users are looking for better usability, content quality, safety, and new features, which are clearly several areas for a new social media platform to consider. Robust privacy features will be an important factor in attracting and keeping these users. While there are functional and surface-level interface issues, the biggest source of user dissatisfaction comes from bad or harmful content. For a new social media platform, focusing on content moderation, positive engagement, and overall user safety could remedy a large percentage of user complaints and provide a better overall experience.

Personal connections are still the biggest motivation for following someone, for social media I would suggest leaning into features that help the user connect with people they already know, while seamlessly allowing discovery of new creators and influencers within the platform, providing a balanced framework for an engaging experience. Users enjoy familiarity and a mix of curated content, highlighting the importance of a platform that integrates algorithmic recommendations alongside content from familiar contacts to cultivate ongoing and future usage.

Although there does exist a smaller group who often participate in discussions and debates, the majority of users are situational users or prefer to not engage in these activities. There exists an almost even divide between users who want content that is edited and curated and users who prefer to post naturally. A social media app that is starting out may be able to attract the quite massive group that would like to edit photos provided the app contains easy yet powerful photo-editing tools. The app would still have to allow the more casual users to post a raw photo.

The majority of users in this research study are users who consumer information and data. Most users reported being infrequent or non-posting to social media. A new platform concentrating on this existing user group may find value in concentrating on producing visually captivating, short-form, image and video content, features that make it easy to share items across platforms, and a visually appealing design that meets user expectations in order to create user engagement and increase customer satisfaction and retention.

The largest group of users are open to trying out new platforms that both have features and experiences of moderate improvement over current apps. That information notes substantial opportunities for new, innovative app platforms to enter and attract Gen Z users by simply filling gaps in current apps.

7 Significance of the Study

This research has essential implications, as it can help to reveal the social media practices of Indian youth, much beyond the usual questions about screen time, addiction, or academic performance. By capturing the quantitative data on device interaction together with the qualitative insights on ideal functionalities and user frustrations, the research provides a holistic view of how GenZ interact with digital media. The findings led us to make the following statement. Z generation uses social media actively not only for fun but also for getting their awareness, education, networking, and shopping. They are able to point out the advantages and disadvantages of today's social media apps and what features a new app should have if it is going to be developed. The highlighting of content format usage (mainly, short-form video usage) also sheds light on the changing trends with a timelier understanding. Moreover, the study gains valuable design-targeted insights by inviting participants to describe the traits they would like to see in future apps, which are not found in existing literature. The study, although set in the Indian context but relevant worldwide, has filled the gap in the method and offered practical recommendations for the researchers, the educators, the policymakers, and social media developers.

8 Scope for Future Research

These are the ways through which this study not only records current facts but also leaves several avenues open for furthering knowledge. The results have a number of implications for social media practice, policy, and research. Since dissatisfaction is high and willingness to defect is elevated, social media platforms ought to focus on tackling user dissatisfaction regarding negative content, algorithmic interference, and privacy. The prevalence of short-form video implies that designers and marketers should continue to experiment in this form to keep users engaged. Another strong direction is longitudinal research designs measuring how youth interests and participation behavior change over time, especially as newer platforms and features are launched. Finally, the data on frustrations and desired features suggest research opportunities that combine communication studies and technology design. Genz's suggestions on new platform features can be used for prototype testing of design models in respect to user needs. Lastly, the notable gender variations in usage deserve greater

exploration. Subsequent studies need to investigate the subsequent psychological and social mechanisms propelling these differences and analyze the long-term effects of passive consumption and algorithmic content on the wellbeing of youth.

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10 Appendix 1

Figure 5.3.1

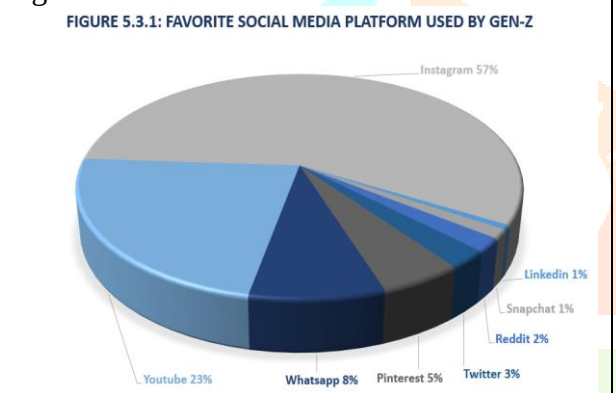
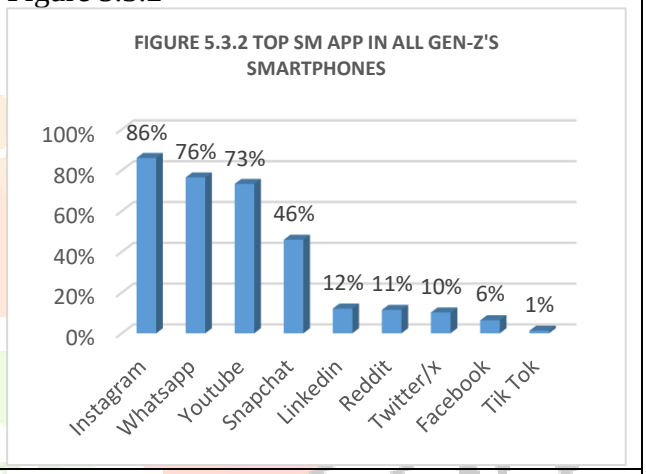


Figure 5.3.2



5.3.4

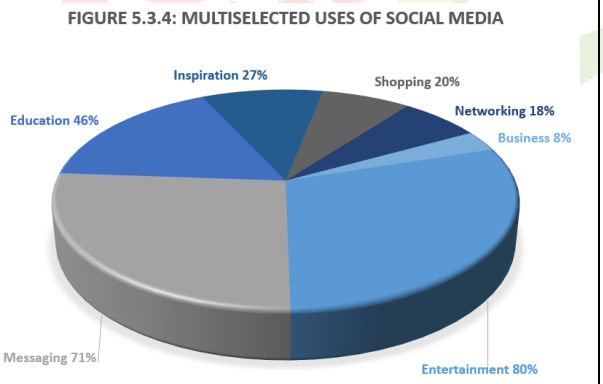


Figure 5.3.6

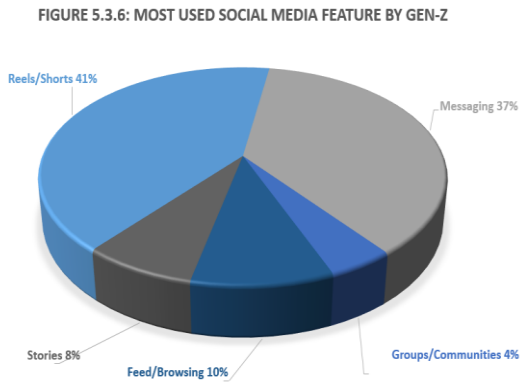


FIGURE 5.4.2 EVER DELETED OR PAUSED SOCIAL MEDIA

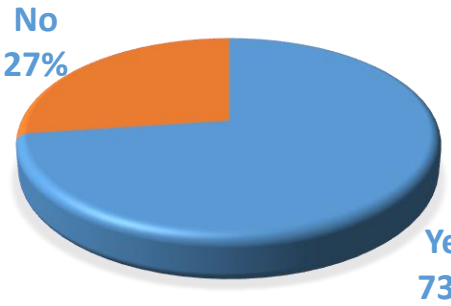


FIGURE 5.4.3 REASON FOR DELETION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

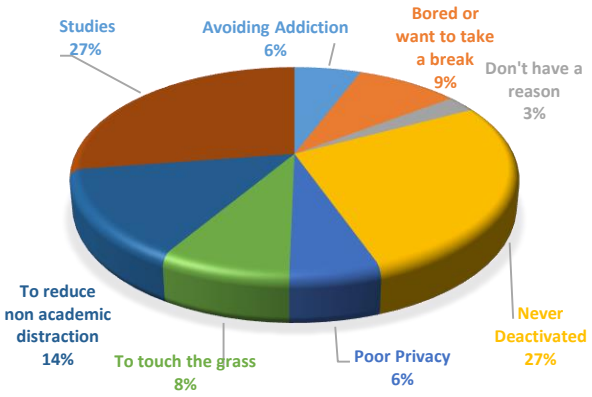
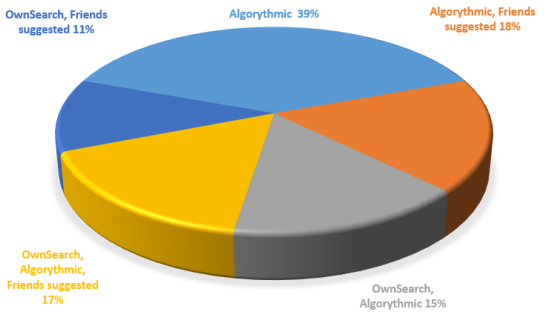


FIGURE 5.5.2 HOW GEN-Z DISCOVER NEW CONTENT OR CREATOR



5.4.4 FRUSTRATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

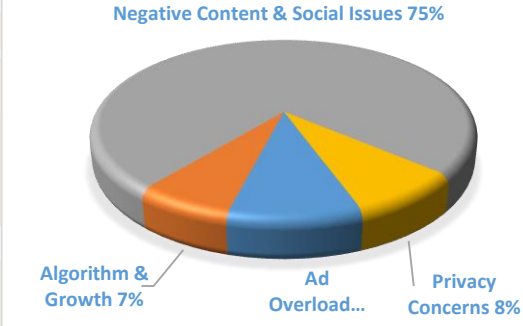


FIGURE 5.4.5 FEATURES DISLIKED

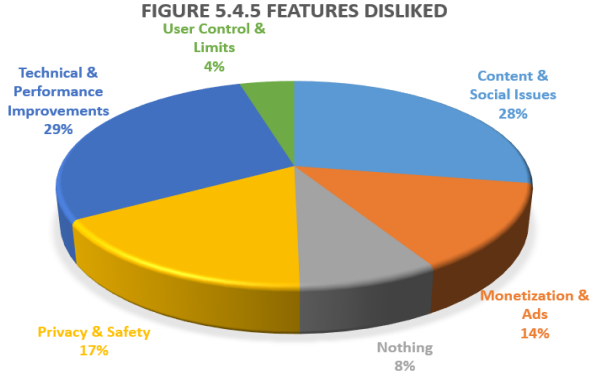


FIGURE 5.5.8 EDIT PHOTOS BEFORE POSTING

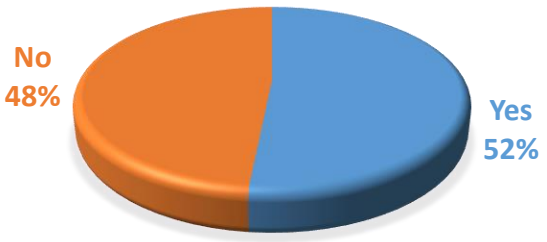


Table 5.3.5

	Using Social Media for	Frequency	Percentage
Application and its networking, entertainment or educational feature	Professional & Community Platforms (Linkedin & Reddit)	6	3.8%
	Visual & Short-Form Content (Instagram & Pinterest)	96	61.1%
	Long-Form Video & Entertainment (Youtube)	38	24.2%
	Micro-Blogging & News (Twitter/X, Reddit)	4	2.5%
	Messaging & Sharing (Whatsapp & Snapchat)	13	8.3%

Table 5.3.7

	Improve Social media by	Frequency	Percentage
The improvements they sought in social media applications	More and advance Features & better Interface	29	18.5%
	Behavior & Control (Like time keeping in Social Media App)	6	3.8%
	Content Management & Quality	31	19.7%
	Monetization & Cost (Free apps, No subscription charges)	9	5.7%
	Nothing to say	34	21.7%
	Increased Safety & Privacy	28	17.8%
	Unique/Novel Features (knowing emotions behind the text)	20	12.7%

Table 5.5.6

	Favourite content and Activity to engage on Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
What is their favorite means / content of engagement in Social Media.	Images and Descriptives	6	3.8%
	Long form Videos	7	4.5%
	Short form videos and Reels	58	36.9%
	Images and Shorts conbined	16	10.2%
	Short and Long form videos only	14	8.9%
	Shorts/Reels and engage in Threads/Comments/Discussions	14	8.9%
	Images, Short and Long form videos	8	5.1%
	Images, Shorts and Threads	10	6.4%
	Images, Short, Long and Threads	5	3.2%
	All other combinations of these	19	12.1%