

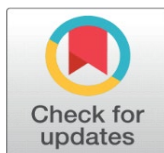
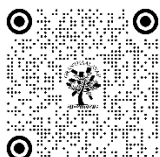


PEOPLE PLACES AND POSTS: EXPLORING DIGITAL IDENTITIES OF URBAN YOUTH OF PUNE

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ABSTRACT

Identity is a vast and slippery term. It is used mostly in social sciences and related sub disciplinary's cultural studies, sociology, and psychology. `Youth` as a stage is an extremely critical period in terms of identity formation Identity is developed by self, but it must be validated by others Identity is central to digital communication technologies because the internet allows the user to change the real social identity (offline) and create a new or recreated identity online The Internet allows us to alter self-micro narrations and authority and the way society shapes identity. Identity is the most crucial element of digital communication because an identity is a context of interpersonal communication. Online culture is a parallel culture for offline or the real culture. The Internet offers a new platform of identity in which real identity can be hidden and it can be reshaped or recreated as per the user's interest hence Internet is a context free medium. We assume that the individual form's identity meanings from society's culture The *self-sentiment* is a crucial aspect. Mobile media usage facilitates the users to develop their self-sentiment related identities in the internet space. Social media usage and getting *likes* and posts can be associated with the self- sentiment.

This research paper explores the variety of online-expressionism of urban youth when they are active on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. In context of the social shaping of identities and the negotiating politics in the online space. The paper also comments and explores the gendered Identities, and body image negotiations in terms of femininity and masculinity in the digital space. The urban young people, their online posts, and the different places all together forms a collage of different identities.

Keywords: People, Place, Post, Identity, Urban, Youth

1. INTRODUCTION

Identity is a vast and slippery term. It is used mostly in social sciences and related sub disciplinarians cultural studies, sociology, and psychology. Youth as a stage is an extremely critical period of identity formation; identity is developed by self, but it must be validated by others [Buckingham \(2008\)](#). Identity is central to digital communication technologies because the internet allows the user to change the real social identity (offline) and create a new or recreated identity online [Castells \(1997\)](#). The Internet allows us to alter self-micro narrations and authority and the way society shapes identity. Identity is the most crucial element of digital

communication because an identity is a context of interpersonal communication. Online culture is a parallel culture for offline or the real culture. Nayar (2012). The Internet offers a new platform of identity in which real identity can be hidden and it can be reshaped or recreated as per the user's interest hence Internet is a context free medium. Livingstone & Drotner (2011). The Internet is a network of computers and smartphones. Individuals create content and it gets available for all. Interestingly all users across the globe can access each other's contextualized content for individual need or desire. Identity is not the same. It has many shades like masculine identity, sexual identity, social identity, Gendered Identity, Power Identity, and all take place in institutional settings Johnson (2007). We assume that the individual forms identity meanings from society's culture Heise & MacKinnon (2010). The *self-sentiment* is a crucial aspect. Mobile media usage facilitates the users to develop their self-sentiment related identities in the internet space. Social media usage and getting likes and posts can be associated with the self-sentiment.

A different aspect about religious identity and the media is explored in *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* by Heidi Campbell (2012). The Internet is an extension for religious communication and becoming online spaces. Digital media is being shaped by religious practices Campbell (2012). Mobile internet users can shape and reshape their identities as per convenience. India is a country of religious variety. Festivals are religious centric in India. Mobile internet user youth in India associate their religious identity on various festivals like Diwali, Ganesh Festivals. Online identity shapes and reshapes at the time of assembly elections where the user associates and expresses their political party related symbolic interactions and shares among others.

2. CONTEXT

This research primarily deals with the online negotiations of the youth in the online space with reference to interpersonal communication, identity, and sexuality. The main focus of the research is the negotiations in the online space, the need of the mobile internet, connectivity, everyday use of the technology in a particular social cultural traditional settings and what actually the youth negotiates and what are their priorities. The research gives gendered perspective of the online space. The negotiations and the online activities are not same for the boys and girls.

3. ABOUT THE FIELD

The strategic importance of Pune city as per digital infrastructure and SMART projects and a city of cultural capital with substantial number of young people make it relevant for the research. The young people access digital gadgets like smart phones for making friendships and relationships. It gets resulted in moral panics due to the social institutional context of society. Youth culture is global phenomena but at local level it is dealing with other social aspects like moral panics. This research will explore the gap between local context and global technology usage with gendered approach and moral panic. Smartphone users are everywhere in any college campus in Pune. It is not that difficult to identify them. Researchers recruited ordinary college going students.

4. DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

- a) In depth Interviews- 11 Respondents (9 Boys and 2 Girls)
- b) Focus Group Discussion: 38 Respondents (17 Boys 21 Girls)

Total 49 Respondents 23 Girls and 26 Boys
Socio Economic Class: Middle class, Lower Middle Class
Language: Marathi

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

The data collection process has been done into two phases due to the lockdown period between March-June-2020 researcher avoided data collection and colleges in India were closed. The first phase of data collection between June 2019-January 2020 researcher has conducted six focus group discussions and eleven in-depth interviews (Total 49 Respondents) in the Pune city. College going students between ages 18-22 were selected with snowball and purposive sampling. The respondents are college going students from conventional and vocational undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Researchers interviewed all the respondents in the natural settings.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

1) “We” and “They”: Social Shaping of Technology & Caste

Social factors like values, beliefs, religion, caste, gender, morals, and even the age of the users affects the usage of communication technology like mobile internet. The choices are central to the social shaping. The *choices* are there and when it gets *selected* by the individuals then the context gets created. The location, the person, and associated social institutional factors shape the usage of the technology. Technology impact may vary as per the social groups. Mobile Phone technology is *telematics* Williams (1997) and it is used for social communication. If we consider from Marxist analysis of technology, then the supplier and the customer are very much indirect in nature. There is no direct exploitation happening. User is not being ordered to do so but the user has his/her conscious selection strategy to select the technology. Hence, the configured communication technology like mobile phones and the internet should be examined with latest technological innovations and within the contemporary contexts.

Indian social contexts are much different than western societies. Indian society is the main actor which is shaping communication technology. The users operate the communication technology as per their social institutional identities. Caste remains the most powerful element in the online space since Indian social structure is still caste driven, though it is illegal from Indian constitution point of view. The indirect forms of caste notions, discriminations, caste consciousness is visible enough on the online space more saliently than real life. Religious content is also reported as normal as the religious Hindu-Muslim tensions in India. Pune is a city of patriotic, nationalists, and social reformers. There are many users who generate content as per their caste and religious philosophies. Religious content among social media has reported an *increase, especially* after the 2014 when right wing Hindu ideology supporter's political party came into power. In this context, not just social factors but the political factors also affect, shape the communication technology. As Ambedkar (1936) a modern scholar, social reformer in his book *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) he commented scholarly upon the social issue of caste in India. Indian caste structure and democracy are paradoxes. Existence of both will never achieve the objective of social welfare, equality, and social democracy. Marxist scholarship of class and exploitation is merely unable to overcome Indian social issues because of the caste. No other country in the world shares common characteristics with the

caste structure in India. Hence, incorporation of caste in social shaping of technology remains important and unavoidable.

Respondents reported on multiple *social* factors, most of the social factors are deeply rooted in the social consciousness among Indian sociality.

“My parents are from different caste, my father is from a different caste, my mother even my aunts, one is from Brahmin Caste and other is Lingayat, mother is from Maratha caste, my grandmother is also Brahmin I am Dhungar and my father. So, it is a caste Khichadi (Mixture) in my family. But everyone has their own caste group, and everyone knows that we are from different caste.” (20-year-old male)

“We are Brahmins, so we have our WhatsApp groups” (20-year-old female)

“Let’s take example of Mob lynching. They say Muslims have troubled us. So today they are getting killed. But my point is that if they have committed some blunders so are, we going to do the same today? My parents don’t answer this question. We are going to crumble their mosque and build a temple so tomorrow vice versa. There is no logical thought behind it. All are making us fool. It is a Ram Rajya Only. Ram bhakta’s are killing all Shambhuka’s. It is all; there on social media for their own profits. There are agencies that work for them (21-year-old male).

“One experience I would share. One of my friends was discussing it on Social Media and the next person replied- “i think you are from lower caste”. He said there is no need to ask caste. He replied if you are talking about Equality and all you must be lower caste. He stopped the chat. These are all from elite class. I have never seen a village and low caste person. They are not aware about this all. They don’t even know how to express over social media” (20-year-old male).

Apart from caste, suppressed sexualities, and Indian taboos such as nudity (nude profile picture) becomes an important aspect of online space and identity. Young people from Pune city are Hindu traditional people, with its values, morality do not allow them openly to talk about sex, gender, and sexuality. Hence internet space becomes essential for them to explore these hidden social elements. Pune is a place of culture. The culture is *standardized*. A global culture, liberal, modern, and beyond (Hindu) religious aspects are mostly unaccepted. Hence, the cultural city does not accept displays of affection, love in public spaces, not even international *global* level colleges and universities.

“Nude sends are also there; my friends don’t like to share their phone photo gallery. If you search somebody phone with words like Vagina, Sex, and Penis. You will get a list of these words immediately. I don’t know where this all will lead to us.”

It indicates the natural curiosity about sex, sexuality, genitals, among youth in Pune. The authoritarian agency resists openly discussing human basics. Hence, smartphones and the internet are the best solution. Every friend of them has the device. They enjoy accessing, sharing, and sometimes producing (Nude Selfies) content. They have the autonomy to produce, share and consume the content with guaranteed privacy due to smartphone and mobile internet. It is a subculture among youth in Pune. It is explained further by sociologists [Russell & Williams \(2002\)](#). Social shaping of technology is a growing body of research and theory that includes different approaches and schemes of various concepts and domains of users. Technology is essentially an autonomous entity. [Goggin, \(2013\)](#)

2) “Identity is changes, as mood swings”: The Network Society & Youth Culture

[Castells \(2009\)](#) argues, network society is a social structure of the information age made by power, production, and experiences of the microelectronics-based

information communication technology [Digital Technology] such as smartphones and mobile internet. 560 million internet users TRAI (2019) in India are part of the network society. The network society Castells (2004) consists of production, consumption, distribution (sharing) by meaningful communication semiotic coded culture. The network does not have start and end, it is nodes, and every node is nothing but a user. The user is the producer, distributor, and consumer of the network society. Most of the users are youth across the world. They form networks of networks and create huge content in audio, visual, textual forms. All the respondents from Pune city reported they have smartphones, mobile internet connections, and social media profiles. They produce, distribute, and share it. The networks are the complex structures of communication. Castells et al. (2009)

The network society is expanding every day in India with new actors (humans) with new contents. The power is shifting from elite urban users to rural semi urban middle class and lower middle-class people. It is enabling people with new possibilities of communication, and consumption of content on the Internet.

The transformation of media technology from Mass communication, Telecommunication and now it is data based interactive networked communication. It is altering time and space logic Van Dijk (2005). Network societies are challenging mass media technologies since it is bound to time and space more than new media technologies such as mobile internet. The network society leads to shared and multiple reconstructed identities. The reconstruction of identities is the widespread practice among youth. They create, hide, and recreate identity and anonymity. The *control* of identity gives *power* to the user for their online existence. Youth create content in the era of network society. The production of content, distribution and consumption is done by a single digital device that is a smartphone. Every college student operates a smartphone camera for capturing images. Image is a powerful visual tool for creating identity Bosch & Curran (2011). Social media profiles of youth are abundant with an abundance of images captured by their own smartphones and sometimes shared by their friends. Images are coded and decoded very easily. There is no barrier for images. An image can be easily seen by anyone no matter of language, culture, and social institutions. Images of people, attitude, places, mood, desire, create a culture of common characteristics. Images are deliberately posted over social media to gain popularity in terms of likes. Culture of mediating space and time is seen as customary practice among youth. Making every moment of their life with an *identity* of desired perceptions. Young people *show* them online the way they wanted to be perceived by others. College youth spend more time in the online space by looking at photographs posted by others. It makes a new sense of perception about real people, society, and culture.

Respondents were asked about identity and social media. Most of them agreed, the internet and social media create multiple identities. The internet is a new ecosystem of communication, information, and perception. Smartphone, mobile numbers, and all *log-in* ids are digital identity in the ecosystem. Every id is an identity in the digital world which is political Hassan (2004).

"Social Media does shape your identity but in my case it's more subtle and I keep control over it" (19-Year-old Female)

"I want to make my own identity through it. So, whenever I perform, I keep those things in my mind that few specific things I must keep only within me." (19-Year-old Male)

"Yes, Identity is changed, mood swings." (19-Year-old female)

The responses above argue about identity in the age of network society. The first response from a nineteen-year-old girl. She talks about the control and reconstruction of identity phenomena. College youth explore many things in their youthful age but they self-censor the social media content. They are very sure about the constructed identity and its perception among others. A very shy-type-girl can post her sexy photographs on social media. Her social media identity will be as a sexy girl over there. She can control it and hold. Her real offline social identity will remain the same and she can hold multiple online identities in cyberspace as per her interest and personality. Most of the social media images of girls are sexuality centric. A close-up photograph, looking directly into the camera, slightly tilted head, open hairs, red dark lips, body exposure reveals the reconstructed identity. Many traditional middle-class girls *show* themselves with hot, sexy, and more beautiful, than their real offline identities [Bosch & Curran \(2011\)](#). There is a feminine sense of mass media centric beauty which girls try to imitate. The main objective of such imitated images is to attract the invisible male gazes. It can be associated with uses and gratification theory developed by [Katz & Blumer \(1973\)](#). The changed identity expects a sense of gratification. [Castells \(2007\)](#) term the generation as mobile youth culture in the network society. It has self-developed social organization, structural buildings, and cultural individualization. It is weakening the control of parental autonomy. Young people are more empowered with the appropriation of technology. It is giving them a sense of security in terms of empowered context such as employment. Patriarchy is disturbing and leading chaotic situations where power collides. Traditional structure of family especially in the Indian context is also going through major transformation due to the penetration in the private spaces of youth. Technology is developing a new culture; the culture is fundamentally different from their parents' culture. New norms and ethical contexts are changing in the process. The technological acquaintance empowers youth. They create their own socialites from the network society. They know their future, income, job opportunities are tied with technology hence they deny the autonomy of patriarchal agencies. Technology adoption remains the only option in front of them. [Castells et al. \(2004\)](#)

Network society strengthens individual identity. It is the community of the individual [Castells \(2007\)](#). Sherry Turkle in her book *Alone Together* [Turkle \(2011\)](#) explores the same. Everyone is together, but it is an illusion of the networked society. There are more expectations from the technology. Consumption is a need in the network society. Status are created through symbols. High symbolic value means elevated level consumer. Consumerism is an important dimension of the network society and culture. Interestingly they do not consume anything physical in the network. Everything is binary [Digital] including cultural artefacts. Symbolic innovation is an essential everyday need for the consumption pattern. Youth always try to create new symbolic innovations through smartphones and applications. Facebook and Instagram are tremendously popular among youth because the access and the way it is accessed is symbolic innovations. The high innovative symbolic innovation content (Text, Image, Audio, and Video) gets more *likes* by the members of network society. These are entirely new ways of appreciating and making their own identity and status through it. The innovations can be created from a variety of contemporary cultural and political contexts. Social media *memes* are the best examples. It is created, consumed, and shared in the online space by the network culture and community. It has context, especially politics and celebrity. Authority, hierarchy easily get humiliated. The cultural artefacts, values do not consider anyone more powerful than the network itself. College students reported that they have experienced many political, religious, and caste-based memes on the internet.

3) “It was me”: Multiplicities of Identities & Superficialities

Youth and identity are the most fluctuating variables. Identity is a vast and slippery term. It is used mostly in social sciences and related sub disciplinarians cultural studies, sociology, and psychology. Youth as a stage is an overly critical period of identity formation Identity is developed by self, but it must be validated by others [Buckingham \(2008\)](#). Youth is a social historic construct rather than a position. Youth identities have always challenged the established social institutions, cultures, and the parent authorities. For example, Hippie culture from America. The identity comes through various symbolic representations. In the same way contemporary youth culture creates, recreates multiple identities online with challenging social institutional authorities. They resist adult authorities with self-creations, expressions, and experiments in the online space especially social media. Because these are the only *spaces* free of adult controls. India is a country of Youth. Indian youth spend lots of time on the internet. The *need* to spend more time there is the nature of Indian patriarchal, high moral society and culture. There are many morality codes in Indian society that contradicts youth culture. Privacy, opposite sex friendship, pre-marital and extra marital sex, monogamy, loyalty, nudity, sexualities are banned and considered as taboo and exactly these things are risen over internet in India. In fact, the internet is used for such activities more than any other use. The Internet gives guaranteed privacy, and there are hundreds of options for every desire which are unacceptable in Indian culture. Youth is a phase of natural attractions towards genders. It is a phase of understanding one's own body, identity, sociality, and overall personality development. No personality can be fully developed without understanding the real self. It is there inside the mind. Social norms are there outside. Hierarchies and parental authorities always cannot be true. Young people keep themselves busy in understanding themselves by their own experimenting with life. In this tricky business of life contemporary youth is with multiple online identities for multiple desires. Social identity, group identity, intimate identity, identities on various social media platforms are different as per their purposes. [Goffman \(2005\)](#) argues about presentation of self, which is an impression management for own objectives. It is quite normal for youth. The *objectives* are to seek partners. Getting the right partner or the companion without proper identity is impossible. We need a fixed identity to impress others. These impressions are symbolic in the online space. The symbolism is an attempt of identity construction. Youth prefer social media usage for achieving their *goals*. It can be simple impression making, making friendship, relationships, expressing sexualities, exploring genders.

Respondents reported about their multiple social media usage as per their desired goal. It is subjective and culture specific. Most of the time friendship and relationship is common despite culture. Respondents reported that they use multiple social media for exploring a variety of goals.

“I have accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp. Social media usage is used so much impulsively as per location and mood. I don't use Instagram for the entire day; I have not used Facebook and Instagram for the last two years. I have already wasted so much time. We get an experience from porn. My friends have already experienced sex. (20-Year-old Male)

“I use it for music and videos, Instagram, and Pinterest. I get so many creative ideas on Pinterest. It has many pages as per our interest (19-year-old female)

“I have two Instagram accounts. One is for family and other is for my private use” (18-year-old male)

“Tinder is a dating App. It is for SINGLE people only, but even married women and men use it, the one who has a girlfriend also uses it. Even fake accounts” (20-Year-old male)

As said by the respondents, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, Tinder, YouTube are these backstage behaviour spaces. Posting a photograph of self on Instagram, it is an identity creation. Tinder is an application dedicated for dating. So, the same user will have two several types of identities on the two different social media platforms as per the objective. Instagram is for validation from others. Instagram posts give them a sense of satisfaction when someone follows them and likes their posts. It is a process of identity creation. More the validations in terms of likes and comments, the user understands his/her positive and negative aspects. It is so interesting to study *what* type of posts and images get maximum likes with more positive comments. The username on Instagram accounts are not as real as their names and surnames. Most of the Instagram users had vastly different constructive, creative usernames which indicates their interests and identity for other users. Most of the times their names and number combinations, special adjectives such as the *filmmaker, unplugged, journo, heartless, saturate, candid, musical, 90ml, error, Awara, Musafir, Peace, Coolest, grey, heartless, official, witty* and many more as per their interest. Every word in the username is a self-narrative keyword which best describes their nature and attitude. Most of them associate their identity with their ambitions and what they want to become. Mostly known people are followed and added as friends on Instagram and Facebook.

Tinder is fundamentally different from Instagram and Facebook. Tinder requires a specific identity where the user is interested to impress the *unknown*. Tinder profiles are with real backstage identity. The user is not revealing their full identity. Tinder profiles create seductive, sexual, attractive, hot, and sexy identities. Tinder is made for interpersonal communication. There is potential possibility of only two people interacting with each other in a private space. The *objectives* are predefined. Because all the users present over *there* came with specific objectives. Tinder based micro narratives has more potentials of authenticity of identity than other social media. Desire, sexuality preferences, bodily preferences, prejudices, can be seen directly on this space. Young women mostly keep mid-long sized profile photographs in which face, and upper body is visible for the targets. Boys mostly keep stylish profile pics highlighting masculinity centric pose. The user must pay for developing communication with best matches. Self-images are the only identity on the internet space which *describes* the user in the most possible ways. Profile pictures are very crucial aspect in terms of identity creation online. Internet space is used mostly for back-stage behaviour identity than front-stage identity.

7. HOT, SEXY AND COOL: GENDER IDENTITIES & IMAGES OF BODIES

Identity is central to new communication technologies because the internet allows you to change your real social identity and you can have a new or recreated identity online [Castells \(1997\)](#). The Internet allows you to alter narrations and authority and the way society shapes your identity. Identity is the most essential element of digital communication because an identity is a context of communication and communication leads to culture. Online culture is a parallel culture for offline or the real culture. [Nayar \(2012\)](#).

Adolescent identity Sexuality is linked intimately to the understanding of subtlest nuances. In India the normative sexuality context is heterosexual married and aspiring to be married. Sexuality is transforming with the advent of media

modernity [Phadke \(2005\)](#). Urban youth explore themselves more freely, liberally, and exactly as per their choices and preferences on the social media platforms. Saliently the Facebook and Instagram platforms are fuelled and filled with young energy in terms of their everyday experiences with their own narrative styles, posts, forwarded and self-created content. [Mackay & Gillespie \(1992\)](#)

In the book titled *Digital Youth: The role of Media in Development* [Subrahmanyam & Šmahel \(2011\)](#) Young adolescent and their digital world is so much complex and dynamic to understand which includes social networking sites, online video games, chat rooms, music and videos, web content, anonymity and private space, emoticons, strangers and much more to yet explore. Sexuality is a prominent issue in the process of development throughout the life cycle but becomes especially salient during youthful age. Romantic relations, sexual behaviour, curiosity gets triggered in the digital space Sexual content is a dominating one on the internet [Subrahmanyam & Šmahel \(2011\)](#) Adolescence culture is Self-Searching. The youth age group is naturally in the process of self-discovery and continuously struggle to create and re-create their own identities in the online space. There are peer groups and their own networks which were developed by themselves as an individual social media user.

Respondent [1] Female Age 19: *“Social Media does shape your identity but in my case it’s more subtle and I keep control over it”*

Respondent [7] Male Age 19: *“Yes! It is because you can choose how you want to show yourself to others”*

They are in the phase of experiencing a new world beyond family, caste, community, and nationality.

Social media is a best channel and access for self-expressions. The forms of expressions are mediatized. Photograph, Selfies, Social Media Live, Likes, Posts, Forwards, Memories, comments, uploads, downloads, and subscribes, these online semiotic spaces are occupied individually. Urban youth of Pune is middle class semi traditional average income level group. Their notions about upward mobility in terms of capitalistic, materialistic associations converts into their self-generated content on social media. It helps them to make their identities online.

A Pune based college girl posts a close-up photo of her in western outfits, dark red lipstick, new short hair style and bold looks represents her pre occupied notions about her body image, aspirations, state of mind and approvals, validations in terms of likes and comments from her peer group and friends or the followers in the online space. An urban Pune based boy, posts on social media with his new bearded look, his western or traditional cloths, attitude, and the same image could contain a masculine looking high cc power bike. These similar types of images could have already been consumed by them in mainstream mass media of the global or the local nature. Most of the identity elements are replicas of mass media centric, capitalistic, contemporary trendy and fashionable. The blend of local and global can be easily seen in the social media posts of the urban Pune youth.

P.4 -19 F (Pune) *“Yes, Identity is getting affected on large level. For example, positivity is NOT COOL anymore, relationships are not cool anymore. There are MEMES for everything; PAIN is there. People don’t talk straightly with you. People talk in MEME languages. - Life SUCKS”*

P.1 -F-19: (Kashmir) *“Yes, Identity is change, MOOD swings. I get updates and News about Jammu and Kashmir then I feel extremely low. Social media changes our mood to very huge extend.”*

The Internet offers a new platform of identity in which real identity can be hidden and it can be reshaped or recreated as per the user's interest hence Internet is a context free medium. [Livingstone & Drotner \(2011\)](#).

Online space is also characterized by the duality of identity, time, space, public and private politics. Identity and how mobile internet usage make their real identity among peer groups. Apart from this all intimacy and desires are also mobile mediated among young people. The personal and intimate discourses associated with the mobile phones and it is a vast area for mobile communication research at global level.

The consumption, production, govern, representation and social identity are the most fundamental questions in understanding the cultural process of adopting a technology [Green & Haddon \(2009\)](#).

Mobile Identity has double meaning due to using mobile media. Mobile identity enables the user to be present in multiple spaces with multiple people. It is quite normal when the young people are online with various social media accounts and even chat with multiple people with multiple purposes. Identity is not the same. It has many shades like masculine identity, sexual identity, social identity, Gendered Identity, Power Identity, and all take place in institutional settings [Johnson \(2007\)](#). Identity formation takes place into cultural theories of people. Our approach is self-semantic. We assume that the individual forms identity meanings from society's culture [Heise & MacKinnon \(2010\)](#). The self-sentiment is a crucial aspect in this research. Mobile media usage facilitates the users to develop their self-sentiment related identities in the internet space. Social media usage and getting *likes* and posts can be associated with the self-sentiment. [Nakamura \(2013\)](#)

8. DISCUSSION

8.1. THE ONLINE IDENTITY POLITICS

The urban Smartphone users, mostly boys keep on posting political contents on their social media profiles to highlight their political ideological identity. One respondent (22-year-old) reported that, his college teacher has tracked his social media account and judged him politically and warned him personally not to continue this in future. The student is a free thinker, activist, and keen learner. The college teacher did not like the way he has opposed the Hindu orthodox traditional values. The apparently painted picture about social media in the mass media is very one sided. In fact, non-Hindu young person of the Pune city can be easily identified, targeted through social media and can be publicly assaulted, threatened. The digital archive of social media posts are a visible visual communication set of content through which his/her political identity can be easily checked. This can be even easier if a person change his/her profile picture on the special social occasions. The whole digital ecosystem is playing a vital role of accelerating political ideological majoritarian validations and at the same time resistance and negotiations for others. The Hindu God images can be easily seen on the social media profile pictures. It indicates the intensions, symbolic visual politics, validations, and shows the need of such images in the general context of Indian contemporary right-wing politics.

8.2. PEOPLE AND POSTS

The digital communication technology has amplified the process of individualization and mediatization. The everyday life of youth is increasingly and intensely mediated. The access, digital literacy, potential abilities, related to internet usage is increasing day by the day. The contextual usage of mobile internet, social

media is characterized by sociality, caste, religion and believe systems. Internet is a best tool for accelerating and expanding neo capitalism. Indian youth is a big market. Social media applications like Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp owned by a single American technology conglomerate. Identity and privacy are the crucial elements of this big data business. The user especially urban youth (Pune) never concern about the implications and potential risks but enjoys and continues the usage. The usage is self-created, self- commanded, self- controlled. It gives a sense of participation, creation, and consumption in the online space. The online space is not separate from the online world, but it is a fabric of online and offline threads. Education, politics, business, almost every aspect of offline real space has an online extension. The infinite space of internet is getting filled by large number of people globally. It is centralizing power, information, and knowledge. Young people perpetually engage in the online world because they see their peers and same age groups already available and responds immediately. [Poletti & Rak \(2014\)](#)

The centrality of the usage is highly contextual. The demographic nature of the country, class, caste (In Indian Context) religion, profession, education, gender, urban, rural, community, location, geography everything has a connection with the usage patterns. The rural people of India might use Smartphones for personal contacts to avoid large distance travels, and the urban could use their mobile internet to order food, book movie shows, and an American or the European teenager might use mobile internet for social media or for self-porn content. Here, the theoretical importance of uses and gratification is essential. The post Covid-19 situation in India and globally highlights the centrality of mobile phones and the internet for personal and social needs.

Note:

- 1) The research paper is part of a data analysis chapter of PhD Thesis of the researcher.
- 2) No financial support has been provided for the study.
- 3) Identity of the respondents has been kept confidential and not revealed in any form.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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