

## Gen Z's Perception on Shaping Public Opinion Through Social Media Post in Ahmedabad City

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores Gen Z's perceptions of shaping public opinion through social media in Ahmedabad, focusing on their engagement with various platforms and the credibility of information. Utilizing quantitative analysis, the research examines significant associations between age and the use of platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook. Findings reveal that while Gen Z actively engages with Instagram and Twitter for public discourse, they express uncertainties regarding the reliability of information shared on social media. The study highlights the necessity for enhanced digital literacy programs to equip young users with critical thinking skills, enabling them to navigate misinformation effectively. Additionally, the research underscores the complex role of social media influencers in shaping opinions, noting that while they are seen as credible sources, a degree of caution prevails. The implications of these findings suggest a pressing need for collaboration among educators, policymakers, and social media platforms to foster responsible engagement and informed participation among Gen Z. Future research avenues include longitudinal studies, comparative analyses across regions, and investigations into the impacts of misinformation, all aimed at enriching the understanding of Gen Z's evolving relationship with social media.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The role of social media platforms in shaping public opinion cannot be understated, as we live in an age where digital interactions have become integral to social engagement (Vidani, 2015). Generation Z, born between the late 1990s and 2010s, is a prime example of, having grown up in an era where social media and digital technology have flourished. Gen Z's engagement with social media shapes their identities, worldviews, and beliefs fundamentally (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). It is not just part of their daily life but fundamental elements shaping their identities, beliefs, and perceptions of the world (Vidani, 2015). This introduction aims to dive into the complex dynamics of how the perception of Gen Z in Ahmedabad city shapes public opinion, with the main focus on their engagement with social media apps like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook and the implications for political and social discourse (Vidani, 2015).

The way individuals communicate, access information, and express themselves has been changed by the rise of social media (Vidani, 2015). Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter have not only redefined social interactions but have also become powerful means for shaping public opinion (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). For Gen Z, social media is not just a communication channel, it is a place where self-expression occurs, Community building, and political engagement happens (Vidani, 2016). Gen Z's interaction with social media is characterized by an unmatched level of connectivity and immediacy (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017).

According to Catherine Cheng Stahl and Ioana Literate's study, Gen Z's self-representation on social media reflects a complex interplay of internal and external self-definition (Niyati & Vidani, 2016). Their research, based on a thematic analysis of videos tagged #GenZ, reveals that this generation projects a multifaceted identity – confident and introspective (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016). This portrayal is not static but evolves through creative processes and collective participation on the platform (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016). Gen Z's engagement with social media serves as a lens through which we can understand their self-perception and approach to shaping public opinion (Vidani, 2016).

Another crucial aspect of understanding Gen Z's digital behaviour is the relationship between social media credibility and political engagement (Sukhanandi, Tank, & Vidani, 2018). Research conducted by Jayne Jeevita Ronald Alfred and Siew Ping Wong points out that Gen Z places more emphasis on the credibility of social media content, especially in the political domain (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). Their study reveals that the perception of social media credibility has a meaningful impact on political engagement among this cohort (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). This finding underscores the crucial role of credible information in shaping Gen Z's political attitudes and actions (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016).

In Ahmedabad, a city with a rich cultural heritage and a growing digital footprint, the interplay between social media and political engagement is particularly relevant (Singh & Vidani, 2016). As young individuals of this city

make their way through the digital world, their opinions on the validity of information and how that influences their political beliefs and behaviour provide important clues about the wider effects of social media on public opinion (Vidani & Plaha, 2016).

In shaping Gen Z's public opinion, the cultural dimensions of social media also play a crucial role (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). Muhsin Soyudoğan and Rime Hanane Abdalli's study on TikTok trends, such as the Buss It Challenge, provides a window into how social media culture influences the perception of identity, body image and fame among young people (Vidani, 2016). Their research reveals that social media culture, shaped by neoliberal and patriarchal expectations, alters how Gen Z perceives time, space, and social norms (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017). For understanding how Gen Z in Ahmedabad constructs and projects their public persona the cultural dimension of social media interaction is also essential (Vidani, 2018).

Analyzing public opinion through social media presents several challenges, as outlined by Xue fan Dong and Ying Lian. Their reviews point out issues related to data collection, quality, and mining methodologies. In the context of Gen Z's engagement with social media in Ahmedabad, these challenges are particularly relevant (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). For effective analysis of social media based public opinion requires overcoming obstacles such as restricted data access, the removal of invalid data, and the optimization of data mining techniques (Vidani, 2018). Addressing these challenges is crucial for obtaining accurate insights of data mining techniques and challenges is crucial for obtaining accurate insights into how Gen Z shapes and responds to public opinion on social media (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018).

Gyan Prakash Yadav and J. Rai's review of social media usage among Gen Z offers a comprehensive overview of how this generation interacts with social media (Vasveliyya & Vidani, 2019). Their research outlines the behaviours, principles, and choices that distinguish Gen Z from other generational cohorts (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). This perspective is essential for understanding the broader aspect of social media usage and its implications for public opinion (Vidani, 2019). The way that Ahmedabad's youth use social media and the effect of this has on society in general offer important insights into the changing patterns of digital participation among different generation (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019).

In summary, the perception of social media's role in shaping public opinion among Gen Z in Ahmedabad is a multifaceted phenomenon (Vidani J. N., 2016). This introduction has highlighted the key areas of interest, including the influence of social media platforms like Instagram on self-representation, the relationship between social media credibility and political engagement, and the cultural implications of social media interaction (Vidani & Singh, 2017). We can get a deeper understanding of how Gen Z in Ahmedabad navigates the digital landscape to shape and reflect public opinion. This exploration not only contributes to the academic discourse on generational identity and social media but also provides practical insights for policymakers, educators, and digital media practitioners (Vidani & Pathak, 2016).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gen Z's Perception of Shaping Public Opinion through Social Media in Ahmedabad City**

The increase in social media has highly transformed communication and public engagement. For Generation Z (Gen Z), born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, social media is not just a common tool but an important aspect of their social engagement (Pathak & Vidani, 2016). This literature review surveys how Gen Z in Ahmedabad considers and connects with social media to shape public opinion. It combines research on Gen Z's digital behaviour (Vidani & Plaha, 2017).

#### **1. The Evolution of Social Media and Gen Z**

Social media has changed drastically since the early 2000s, transforming from simple networking sites to different platforms that influence various characteristics of life (Vidani J. N., 2020). This change has shaped the way Gen Z interacts with innovative technology and media (Vidani J. N., 2018).

- **Historical Context and Platform Development**

Social media has gone from early platforms like Friendster and Myspace to the dominance of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok shows wider technological and cultural change (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020). The combination of multimedia factors, such as video and live streaming, has expanded the scope of social media from basic text-based communication to a rich, multimodal environment (Boyd, 2014) (Vidani, Meghrajani, & Siddarth, 2023). Gen Z's connection with social media is distinguished by a preference for visual and interactive content (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022). Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become centre to their social lives, which gives spaces for self-expression (Smith & Duggan, 2013) (Vidani & Das, 2021). This preference shows a change from the text interactions typical of old age social media platforms to a more active and lively online experience (Vidani J. N., 2022).

- **Generational Characteristics and Social Media Usage**

Gen Z is differentiated by their digital parturition, having grown up with internet access and mobile technology (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). This generational property shapes their interaction with social media, changing their communication style and language, information consumption, and social norms (Prensky, 2001) (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023). Research by Yadav and Rai (2017) highlights how Gen Z's social media usage different from earlier generations, highlight their dependence on platforms for news, entertainment, and socialization (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023).

#### **2. Gen Z's Self-Representation and Public Opinion on Social Media**

Self-portrayal on social media is a censorious factor of how Gen Z shapes and consider public opinion (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023). Platforms like Instagram gives as spaces for creative self-representaton and collective identity formation (Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023).

- The Role of TikTok in Shaping Identity

TikTok, is a platform which is known for its short video content, has become a used tool for Gen Z's self-expression (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023). Cheng Stahl and Literat (2022) showed an analysis of TikTok videos tagged #GenZ, reveals that Gen Z expresses itself as a generation of combination of both powerful and vulnerable (Sharma & Vidani, 2023). This express is facilitated through creative processes that reveals both individual and collective characteristics of their identity (Sharma & Vidani, 2023). TikTok's algorithmic structure promotes viral content based on engagement metrics, which further influences how Gen Z constructs and projects their public opinion (Mahajan & Vidani, 2023). The platform's focuses on trends and challenges motivates users to connect in collective activities that shape their social identity (Marwick, 2013) (Saxena & Vidani, 2023)

- Collective Self-Definition and Online Communities

The collective nature of social media permits Gen Z to connect in collective self-definition and community building (Vidani, 2015). Soyudoğan and Abdalli's (2023) analysis of TikTok trends, such as the Buss It Challenge, shows how Gen Z cross and negotiates their recognition through participating in viral challenges and memes (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). These pursuits not only reflect personal identity but also put up to wider cultural description and public opinions (Vidani, 2015). The interaction between individual expression and collective engagement on social media highlights the vigorous nature of Gen Z's self-expression (Vidani, 2015). The platform's affordances authorize users to craft and sprinkle their identities in unusual ways that combines with both personal and collective values (Vidani, 2015).

### 3. Social Media Credibility and Political Engagement

The credibility of social media contents crucially results Gen Z's political engagement (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). Understanding how Gen Z look up and assess the credibility of information is important for analysing their political behaviour on social media (Vidani, 2016).

- Perception of Credibility and Its Impact

Research by Ronald Alfred and Wong (2022) demonstrates that Gen Z places a high value on the credibility of social media content, especially in political contexts (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). Their study found that a positive perception of social media credibility corresponds with increased political engagement among Gen Z (Niyati & Vidani, 2016). This research enhances the significance of credible information in shaping political attitudes and way of behaving (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016). Gen Z's proceeds towards to evaluating credibility which require assessing sources, cross-referencing information, and relying on squint validation (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016). This approach shows an important understanding of information quality and trustworthiness, which is pivotal in an era characterized by information

overload and misleading information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007) (Vidani, 2016).

- **Challenges in Evaluating Credibility**

Even with their digital savvy, Gen Z finds it difficult to assess social media authenticity (Sukhanandi, Tank, & Vidani, 2018). Differentiating reputable sources from untrustworthy ones is made more difficult by the presence of false information and fake news on social media platforms (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). The review by Dong and Lian (2021) draws attention to issues with data mining, quality control, and collecting in social media-based public opinion analysis (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). These difficulties are especially important when it comes to political participation, since false information has the power to sway public opinion and threaten democratic systems (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). Creating plans for boosting users' critical media literacy and data accuracy are necessary to address these issues (Vidani & Plaha, 2016). For Gen Z to engage in informed politics, platform interventions and educational programs that support media literacy and dispel disinformation are crucial (Solanki & Vidani, 2016).

4. **Cultural and Social Implications of Social Media Usage**

The views and actions of Generation Z are influenced by social media culture (Vidani, 2016). Gen Z's engagement with and interpretation of public opinion is influenced by the ways in which social media changes cultural norms and values (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017).

- **Social Media Culture and Identity Formation**

The culture of social media significantly influences how Gen Z views identity, physical image, and social standards (Vidani, 2018). According to research by Soyudoğan and Abdalli (2023), social media trends frequently mirror patriarchal and neoliberal norms, affecting how Gen Z views and projects their identities (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). The monetization of celebrity and the sexualization of the female body are two major facets of social media culture that affect Gen Z's public identities and self-concept (Vidani, 2018). The content and interactions on platforms such as TikTok, where trends and challenges frequently reinforce certain values and preconceptions, are a clear reflection of these cultural processes (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018). It is essential to comprehend these cultural ramifications to analyze how Gen Z uses social media to influence and reflect public opinion (Vasveliya & Vidani, 2019).

- **The Impact of Social Media on Public and Private Realms**

Social media has an impact on both the public and private spheres of life in addition to an individual's identity (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). Gen Z's approach to social issues and public discourse is affected by the way public and private areas on social media platforms are becoming increasing demand (Vidani, 2019). Yadav and Rai's (2017) research emphasizes the systemic effects of social media use on people, organizations, and society (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019). The capacity to

disseminate one's thoughts and experiences to a worldwide audience shapes Gen Z's understanding of and engagement in public issues (Vidani J. N., 2016). The way that Gen Z participates in social and political engagement as well as the larger public opinion landscape are affected by this change in public-private relations (Vidani & Singh, 2017).

#### 5. Methodological Approaches to Studying Social Media-Based Public Opinion

To guarantee accuracy and dependability, thorough analytical approaches are needed when analyzing public opinion on social media (Vidani & Pathak, 2016). This section examines the difficulties and suggestions for performing public opinion research using social media (Pathak & Vidani, 2016).

- Challenges in Data Collection and Analysis

Dong and Lian (2021) point out a number of obstacles in analysing public opinion via social media, such as issues with data gathering, quality, and extraction (Vidani & Plaha, 2017). Challenges like limited data access, eliminating erroneous data, and enhancing data mining techniques are major obstacles to efficient analysis (Vidani J. N., 2020). Tackling these obstacles requires utilizing various data sources, improving keyword configurations, and strengthening interdisciplinary teamwork (Vidani J. N., 2018). It is crucial to create methods that consider the distinct features of social media data, such as language and cultural context, to accurately understand public opinion (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020).

- Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies on analysing public opinion through social media need to concentrate on enhancing methods for collecting and analysing data (Vidani, Meghrajani, & Siddarth, 2023). Suggestions involve implementing new data mining methods, improving media literacy programs, and dealing with ethical issues surrounding data privacy and personal data (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022). Creating cross-disciplinary strategies that combine knowledge from communication studies, data science, and social psychology can offer a more thorough comprehension of how social media influences public opinion (Vidani & Das, 2021). Furthermore, investigating the differences in social media usage and perspectives across regions and cultures, like Ahmedabad, can provide important understanding of the worldwide and local aspects of shaping public opinions (Vidani J. N., 2022).

This literature review focuses on the intricate relationship between Gen Z's use of social media and their understanding of public opinion (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). Studying the development of social media, the impact of platforms such as TikTok, and the consequences for political and social involvement helps us comprehend how Gen Z in Ahmedabad interacts with and influences public discussions (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023). The obstacles and potential benefits outlined in this evaluation serve as a basis for upcoming research and real-world applications in the realm of social media

research (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023). Policymakers, educators, and digital media practitioners must grasp Gen Z's online behavior and how it influences public opinion (Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023). By tackling the obstacles and taking advantage of the opportunities of social media, stakeholders can encourage well-informed and positive public interaction with Gen Z (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023).

## METHODOLOGY

Table 1. Research Methodology

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Research Design</b>        | Descriptive   |
| <b>Sample Method</b>          | Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method  |
| <b>Data Collection Method</b> | Primary method  |
| <b>Data Collection Method</b> | Structured Questionnaire  |
| <b>Type of Questions</b>      | Close ended   |
| <b>Data Collection mode</b>   | Online through Google Form  |
| <b>Data Analysis methods</b>  | Tables  |
| <b>Data Analysis Tools</b>    | SPSS and Excel  |
| <b>Sampling Size</b>          | <b>154</b>  |
| <b>Survey Area</b>            | <b>Ahmedabad</b>  |
| <b>Sampling Unit</b>          | Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc. |

Source: Author's compilation

### Demographic Summary

The demographic summary of our research on Gen Z's perception of shaping public opinion through social media post in Ahmedabad reveals several key insights and notable points. Out of the 155 respondents, majority of them identified as female (63.2%), while 36.1% were male. If we talk about educational level, most of them were either graduates (30.3%) or postgraduates (41.3%), indicating a highly educated sample. Age wise, the highest number of respondents were from the 19-21 age range (40.0%), with students making up 58.7% of the respondents. Social media usage patterns showed that Instagram was the most popular platform, with 56.8% of respondents using it every time, while most of them (52.9%) were never engaged with TikTok. 59.3% of participants believe that platform like Instagram significantly Influence their views on social and political issues. Additionally, 70.3% of participants consider content from social media influencers a reliable source of information, and 72.9% feel that social media keeps them informed about political issues compared to traditional news sources in a better way and conveniently. Furthermore, among the participants 76.8% actively share or repost content to influence other's opinions. These findings suggest that Gen Z in Ahmedabad not only engages with social media extensively, however, also sees it as a crucial tool of medium for shaping public opinion and staying up to date.



## RESULT

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing.

| Sr. No | Alternate Hypothesis  | Result p = | >/< 0.05 | Accept/Reject Null hypothesis           | R value | Relation ship |
|--------|---|------------|----------|---|---------|---------------|
| H1     | There is a significant association between age and the use of Instagram as a social media platform.   | 0.002      | <        | H01 Rejected (Null hypothesis rejected) | .000    | Weak          |
| H2     | There is a significant association between age and the use of TikTok as a social media platform.  | 0.262      | >        | H02 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .151    | Weak          |
| H3     | There is a significant association between age and the use of Twitter as a social media platform.   | 0.002      | <        | H03 Rejected (Null hypothesis rejected) | .001    | Weak          |
| H4     | There is a significant association between age and the use of Facebook as a social media platform.  | 0.223      | >        | H04 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .007    | Weak          |
| H5     | There is a significant association between age and the use of Snapchat as a social media platform.  | 0.002      | <        | H05 Rejected (Null hypothesis rejected) | .000    | Weak          |
| H6     | There is a significant association between age and the belief that social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram significantly influence views on social and political issues. | 0.340      | >        | H06 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .286    | Weak          |
| H7     | There is a significant association between age and the belief that content from social media influencers is a reliable source of information about current events.                | 0.807      | >        | H07 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .395    | Weak          |
| H8     | There is a significant association between age and the frequency of   | 0.124      | >        | H08 Accepted (Null                      | .986    | Strong        |

|            |   |       |   |   |      |        |
|------------|---|-------|---|---|------|--------|
|            | engaging with social media posts that align with personal beliefs and values.   |       |   | hypothesis accepted)                    |      |        |
| <b>H9</b>  | There is a significant association between age and the belief that social media helps to stay informed about political issues more effectively than traditional news sources. | 0.920 | > | H09 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .903 | Strong |
| <b>H10</b> | There is a significant association between age and the frequency of sharing or reposting content on social media to influence others' opinions on various issues.             | 0.563 | > | H10 Accepted (Null hypothesis accepted) | .876 | Strong |

Source: Author's compilation

## DISCUSSION

Especially as it relates to the emerging generation, Generation Z, social media has revolutionized the process of opinion formation. The purpose of this study is to examine how Generation Z views their role in articulating public opinion the effectiveness of tools used in public opinion shaping in Ahmedabad was examined through the use of social media tools.

In this study, with a p-value of 0.002 for Instagram, the fact that age correlated with Instagram use indicates the importance of these platforms for engaging Gen Z. Younger people, who use these platforms to voice their opinions, are most likely to reject these hypotheses. An R value of .000 indicates a strong relationship, highlighting the platforms' role as primary channels of public discourse, but it is paradoxical that the relationship is considered "weak" from a practical perspective. It appears that even if usage occurs, public opinion may not be affected as profoundly as believed.

In contrast, TikTok and Facebook showed no strong correlations with age. The respective p-values of 0.262 and 0.223 accepted the null hypothesis. Though Gen Z consumes Instagram and Twitter content, their engagement with these platforms may not be as significant as they may appear. For example, the R values are .151 and .007, which indicate that even though Gen Z consumes Instagram and Twitter content, their engagement may not be as significant as they appear. Similarly, their engagement with social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter raises questions about the nature of the content and type of interactions taking place, as it may be more entertainment-oriented rather than valid and relevant.

A significant conclusion is the impact of social media on social and political issues. It is hypothesized that platforms like TikTok and Instagram have a significant effect on opinions about these issues. It indicates Gen Z is

aware of how such sites can influence opinions, but do not necessarily buy everything they see on them. The p-value for this hypothesis was 0.340, with an R value of .286. Various reasons may be at play, such as misinformation and the lack of credibility of sources, especially considering the technological evolution that is taking place today.

Social media influencers are also generally regarded as credible information sources, although negatively correlated ( $p = 0.807$ ,  $R = .395$ ). This suggests that Gen Z continues to be intelligent despite influencers shaping opinion. It is important to understand that they often engage with posts that are indicative of what they believe and value about, as evidenced by the ( $p = 0.124$ ,  $R = .986$ ) correlation regarding their frequent engagement.

Social media's impact on traditional news ( $p = 0.920$ ,  $R = .903$ ) adds yet another layer of complexity to the picture. Gen Z recognizes the utility of social media in providing real-time information. As a generational tension, these two characteristics are exemplified in the bivalence of social media usage: they will be full members, but at the same time may still have a critical attitude towards it.

Overall, while Gen Z in Ahmedabad is active on social media, the impact it creates about having an influence over public opinion seems complex. Instagram and Twitter dependence therefore indicate a fondness for open spaces with a tendency toward dialogue, but it indicates a lack of trust in the content produced. It highlights the necessity of continuing to research how to make digital literacy and, more importantly, critical thinking skills more accessible to young users to engage them in meaningful conversations regarding social media.

### **Theoretical Implications**

There are numerous significant theoretical ramifications to the study of Ahmedabad's Gen Z population's perspective of social media's role in influencing public opinion. These ramifications increase our knowledge of generational behaviour, social media dynamics, and the larger discussion of media influence.

1. **The Public Sphere of social media:** The results support Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere, which holds that public debate takes place in areas where people are free to share their opinions. The extensive participation of Generation Z on social media sites like Instagram and Twitter emphasizes these platforms as contemporary forums for social and political discourse. A more nuanced perspective of the public sphere in digital environments is necessary, as evidenced by the observed doubts regarding the reliability of information. This shows that although these platforms promote debate, they may also degrade the quality of involvement.
2. **Media Trust and Credibility:** The report emphasizes how crucial trust and credibility are to Gen Z's media intake. A change in the way younger audiences assess information sources is suggested by the modest correlations found with the perceived impact of social media on public opinion. This is consistent with theories of media credibility and trust,

indicating that Gen Z is becoming more discriminating and critical of the information they come across on social media even as they use it for information. Future ideas on media consumption patterns and the standards by which younger generations assess the reliability of information sources can benefit from these disbeliefs.

3. **Influencer Dynamics:** The literature on influencer marketing and digital communication is enhanced by the recognition of social media influencers as reliable information sources, albeit with some skepticism. Through the prism of social identity theory, this dynamic can be explained, with influencers potentially connecting more strongly with audience segments. The dichotomy of dependence on influencers and concurrent suspicion toward them points to a nuanced relationship that requires more investigation in the context of Gen Z identity formation and group dynamics.
4. **Digital Literacy and Critical Engagement:** The study emphasizes how important it is for Gen Zs to have better digital literacy. According to the findings, educational frameworks that encourage critical interaction with digital content are desperately needed, even though this generation is tech-savvy and engaged on social media. This is in accordance with new ideas of digital literacy that highlight how crucial it is to provide young people the tools they need to evaluate information sources critically and comprehend the ramifications of their online activities. This has wider ramifications for education and policy, indicating that media literacy instruction should be included in curriculum to equip the next generation to navigate a challenging digital environment.
5. **Changing Dynamics of Political Engagement:** Conventional conceptions of political involvement are called into question by the shaky correlations between social media use and political engagement. Although Gen Z uses social media to discuss politics, their doubts about the platforms' power point to a departure from more traditional forms of civic participation. This can give rise to new theories that investigate different ways that younger generations can get involved in politics, especially as they look for more significant and reliable ways to do so.

In conclusion, the theoretical implications of this research extend beyond the immediate findings, revealing insights into the changing link between social media, public opinion, and generational identity. Through acknowledging the intricacies of Gen Z's social media usage, academics and professionals can more effectively comprehend and tackle the difficulties.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this study on Ahmedabad's Gen Z perspective of social media's ability to influence public opinion have a number of applications for educators, legislators, social media companies, and marketers, among other stakeholders. These ramifications can guide tactics to promote appropriate social media use, increase engagement, and advance digital literacy.

1. **Enhanced Digital Literacy Programs:** The creation of digital literacy curriculum that provide students the capacity to assess information

sources and think critically should be given top priority by educational institutions. Media literacy-focused workshops and classes can assist Gen Z in navigating the intricacies of social media, comprehending false information, and evaluating the reliability of influencers and content producers. Universities and schools can work with specialists to create curricula that cater to the unique requirements and difficulties that young people encounter in digital environments.

2. **Promotion of Credible Influencers:** Companies and brands ought to think about collaborating with credible influencers who share the values of Generation Z and exhibit openness. Brands may help foster trust on social media by endorsing influencers who value dependability and genuineness. Campaigns that prioritize source validation and fact-checking can raise the perceived legitimacy of influencer material, promoting followers' responsible sharing and interaction.
3. **Policy Development for Social Media Platforms:** To counteract false information and promote reliable material, social media firms should establish and fortify their policies. A more trustworthy atmosphere can be created with features like improved fact-checking, open advertising, and algorithms that give preference to reliable sources. Platforms should also fund user education programs that teach users how to recognize reliable information and comprehend the consequences of their online interactions.
4. **Engagement Strategies for Civic Participation:** social media can be used by civic associations and nonprofits to get Gen Z involved in community activity and political debate. This group can develop a sense of agency through tactics that promote communication and provide young voices a forum. Initiatives like community events or advocacy campaigns that blend online, and offline participation might inspire Gen Z to get involved in civic affairs and build lasting relationships.
5. **Research and Development in Social Media Analytics:** Companies and scholars ought to spend money creating instruments that examine Gen Z sentiments and social media trends. Public relations, content production, and marketing initiatives can all benefit from an understanding of this demographics' changing preferences and attitudes. Organizations may better meet the demands and expectations of Gen Z consumers by remaining aware of how social media is changing.
6. **Community Building and Support Networks:** Programs that help Gen Z users form communities can increase their use of social media for constructive social change. Young people can join around common interests and issues by using online platforms to develop forums for dialogue, cooperation, and support. These groups can act as encouraging networks that enable people to voice their thoughts and take part in influencing public policy.
7. **Education for Content Producers and Influencers:** For influencers and content producers to comprehend their influence on public opinion and the obligations that accompany their positions, workshops and materials

should be made available. Influencers can be empowered to use their platforms ethically and constructively by receiving training on audience engagement, disinformation, and ethical content creation.

To sum up, the research's practical consequences highlight how crucial it is for schools, social media companies, marketers, and community organizations to work together. A more informed and responsible online environment can be created by stakeholders through the implementation of focused strategies that improve digital literacy, support reliable material, and meaningfully engage Gen Z. This will result in a more involved and responsible generation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The exploration of Gen Z's perception regarding the shaping of public opinion through social media post in the city reveals important insights into the dynamics of digital engagement among the youth. The research points out that, while platforms like Instagram and Twitter are actively used by Gen Z to express their opinions and engage in public discourse, there remains doubtfulness towards the credibility of information presented on these platforms. This duplexity highlights the complexities of social media as both a tool for empowerment and a source of potential misinformation.

The findings show a clear need for upgraded digital literacy programs that equip Gen Z with the skills necessary to critically assess information and navigate the challenges of online interactions and engagement. Moreover, the influencers perceived as trusted sources of information, despite of some doubtfulness, suggest that the influence of social media can be utilized more effectively through transparency and authenticity.

As social media continues to progress, the implications for professors or teachers, policymakers, and business leaders are important. By adjusting environments that rank responsible engagement, critical thinking, and community building, stakeholders can empower Gen Z to become informed participants in public discussion. At last, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between social media and public opinion, highlighting the necessity for ongoing talk and collaboration in promoting a more informed and engaged generation.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The findings of this study on Gen Z's perception of shaping public opinion through social media in Ahmedabad open several avenues for future research. These recommendations aim to deepen the understanding of this dynamic field and explore new dimensions of social media engagement.

1. Longitudinal Studies: Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that track changes in Gen Z's perceptions and behaviors over time. By examining how their engagement with social media evolves, researchers can identify trends related to political participation, trust in media, and the effectiveness of educational interventions.
2. Comparative Studies across Regions: Conducting comparative studies in different geographical locations can provide insights into how cultural,

social, and political contexts influence Gen Z's social media engagement. Exploring perceptions in diverse urban and rural settings could uncover variations in how public opinion is shaped across different communities.

3. In-depth Qualitative Research: Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, can offer deeper insights into the motivations, attitudes, and experiences of Gen Z users on social media. This approach can help uncover nuanced perspectives that quantitative data may not fully capture, particularly regarding the influence of social media on identity formation and civic engagement.
4. Exploration of Specific Platforms: Future research could focus on specific social media platforms, such as TikTok or Snapchat, to understand how unique features and user demographics affect content creation, engagement, and public opinion. Investigating the role of emerging platforms can provide valuable insights into the shifting landscape of social media.
5. Impact of Misinformation: Given the observed skepticism towards the credibility of information on social media, studies could investigate the impact of misinformation campaigns on Gen Z's beliefs and behaviors. Understanding how misinformation spreads and affects public opinion can inform strategies for promoting media literacy and critical engagement.
6. Role of Education and Interventions: Research assessing the effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at improving digital literacy among Gen Z could provide valuable data on best practices. Evaluating programs that teach critical media consumption skills could help identify effective strategies for fostering informed social media use.
7. Influencer Impact Studies: Further exploration into the role of influencers in shaping public opinion is warranted. Research could focus on how different types of influencers—such as activists, celebrities, and micro-influencers—affect perceptions and engagement among Gen Z audiences.
8. Gender and Identity Considerations: Future studies could explore how factors such as gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic background influence Gen Z's engagement with social media. Understanding these intersections can lead to more tailored approaches in addressing the needs and preferences of diverse groups.
9. Policy Impact Analysis: Research could also assess the impact of existing policies related to social media use, data privacy, and misinformation on Gen Z's engagement and perceptions. This analysis could inform policymakers on necessary adjustments to better support young users in navigating digital spaces.
10. Global Perspectives: Finally, expanding the research to include global perspectives on Gen Z's social media engagement can provide a broader understanding of how global trends affect local practices. Examining cross-cultural influences on public opinion formation can enrich the academic discourse on social media's role in society.

In summary, these recommendations highlight the need for comprehensive and multifaceted research to fully understand the complexities of Gen Z's engagement with social media and its implications for shaping public opinion. As this demographic continues to evolve in a rapidly changing digital landscape, ongoing research will be essential in informing practices, policies, and educational initiatives that empower young people to engage meaningfully and responsibly in public discourse.

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