AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM IN LGBTQ GENDER IDENTITY ANDPORTRAYAL

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
Master of Arts in Journalism and Mass Communication degree offered by
JAIN (DEEMED TO BE A UNIVERSITY)
During the year 2023-2024

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that the research paper titled "An Empirical Study on the Role of Instagram in LGBTQ Gender Identity and Portrayal" is an original work prepared and written by me under the guidance of Dr. Bhargavi D Hemmige, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jain (Deemed-to-be University), in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Journalism and Mass Communication. This research paper or any other part of it has not been submitted to any other University for the award of another degree or diploma.

Date: 26.08.2024   Anannya Mohapatra

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Acknowledgment

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Bhargavi D. Hemmige Ma'am for her vital cooperation and help in ensuring the successful completion of my work.

I would convey my sincere thanks to my classmates and friends for their useful advice and suggestions; without them, the task would not have been accomplished in such a timely manner.

I extend my obligation and acknowledge the support given by Dr. Dinesh Nilkanth, Director, Jain (Deemed-to-be University)- Centre for Management Studies, Bengaluru.

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ABSTRACT

Heterosexuality, in general, is referred to as being 'straight', and is characterized by the societal expectation that men should adhere to masculine traits, while women should embody femininity. Within this framework, individuals of different genders are anticipated to feel a mutual attraction. In societal norms, heterosexuality holds numerical dominance and is largely perceived as a natural orientation. On the contrary, homosexuality, enclosing emotional and sexual attractions between individuals of similar genders, challenges the usual majority norm. This includes cases where males are attracted to males, females to females, or individuals expressing attraction to both sexes. Regrettably, despite increasing acceptance, homosexuality is still sometimes regarded as unnatural within societal contexts.

As societal attitudes towards gender and sexual orientation evolve, social media platforms like Instagram have emerged as influential spaces for self-expression and community building within the LGBTQ community. This critical study understands how Instagram is a virtual board for individuals to express, explore, and reconsider their gender identities.

However, understanding the complex nature of LGBTQ identity portrayal on Instagram is essential to comprehend how social media is changing and how it is affecting society's views concerning those with different gender orientations. This study adds significant knowledge to the field and will guide future investigations into the relationship between LGBTQ identity, digital platforms, and the wider sociocultural effects of online self-expression. Moreover, this study's empirical data improves our knowledge of how Instagram contributes to the expression and visibility of LGBTQ gender identities in the modern digital era.

In a world where social spaces highly shape our basic identity, this research throws light on the multiple roles of Instagram in influencing and reflecting LGBTQ gender identities. As we delve deep into the intersections of technology, identity, and social dynamics, this study aims to contribute valuable insights into the ongoing discussion on LGBTQ representation in the new digital age.

Keywords: LGBTQ, Instagram, Gender Identity, Homosexuality, social media

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Instagram is a widely used social media platform that is essential for forming and expressing personal identities and facilitating social relationships. The LGBTQ community has discovered a vibrant place for self-representation in this digital environment, defying social norms and encouraging a sense of community. This empirical study explores the complex interaction between Instagram and the LGBTQ community, concentrating on gender identity and representation. The LGBTQ community has long sought platforms for representation and self-expression, questioning established ideas about who they are and building a feeling of community with no geographical bounds. Instagram's visually focused layout presents itself as a blank canvas on which users may express their own stories, especially when it comes to gender identification. This research attempts to explore the complex ways that LGBTQ people use Instagram to navigate, negotiate, and present their gender identities. By doing so, it hopes to shed light on the various ways that identity is created and expressed in the digital era. (Matthew N. Berger, Melody Taba, Jennifer Lauren Marino, Megan S C Lim., 2021).

Research conducted on understanding the role of social media role in spreading the movement of LGBT in Malaysia shows that social media has a huge role in reshaping the thoughts of society along with spreading the movement of LGBT (Mokhtar et al., 2019).

This study adds to the expanding corpus of research that looks at how social media platforms affect the creation of identities as society struggles with changing views on gender and sexuality. We hope to shed light on how Instagram both reflects and shapes the LGBTQ community's view of gender by specifically looking at this medium. We want to identify the patterns, trends, and unique experiences that add to the complex fabric of LGBTQ identity portrayal on Instagram through empirical research and analysis.

Using the qualitative approach, the study consists of insights from surveys and other research reports. The goal is to present a thorough understanding of the role in the formation, negotiation, and communication of LGBTQ gender identities by triangulating data from several sources. In the end, this study aims to advance our understanding of the complex interactions that occur between social media platforms and the LGBTQ community, promoting communication that transcends digital space and enters the larger public conversation about acceptance and identity.

SOCIAL MEDIA

In other words, social media refers to a communication format in which users create profiles, post materials, communicate, and keep in touch with other users using websites and other digital platforms (such as apps). Social media may be used by users to meet new people and communicate with individuals they currently know. In addition, it serves as a means of consuming content from media and participating in various activities that change according to the website. Popular social media platforms include Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter. In the US, almost all young people utilize social media on some level. Social media is particularly popular among young people, who utilize it to help shape their identities throughout their formative years, including their gender identity and sexual orientation. (Shelley L. Craig, Andrew D. Eaton, Lauren B. McInroy, Vivian W. Y. Leung, and Sreedevi Krishnan., 2021).

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUALITY

It is reasonable to argue that scientific studies on the origins of human sexual orientation have generated more debate than they should have. The scientific agreement on what is (and isn't) known is easily obscured by claims, such as the one that one was "born gay," which gloss over the scientific subtleties and elicit emotional emotions for political, moral, and religious reasons. Much less controversially, research methodologies used for other

psychological characteristics and behaviors are, for the most part, comparable or identical to those used in the study of nature vs nurture in human sexuality. Many findings of this kind of study may now be positively validated based on the information at hand, notwithstanding its limitations and current disagreements. It is crucial to simply point out at this point that many professional organizations now base their ethical position on the belief that homosexuality is a natural variety of human sexuality. The rationale for that ethical position becomes clearer when we look at the scientific explanations for this variance. (Christopher C. H. Cook., 2020)

MISINTERPRETATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN INDIA

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not always separate concepts in Indian culture; rather, they are intertwined. Even though homosexuality has a long history in India, it is generally believed to be a relatively new, Western phenomenon.

With a population of approximately 1.428 billion now, India lacks verified statistics to determine the true number of LGBTQ people living there. During the study process, the most recent official census data released by the Indian government was from 2023, confirming the underreported estimate of 125 million LGBTQ people worldwide. Many LGBTQ people are forced to stay secretive since most of the societal response in India is still hostile to sexual diversity. Nonetheless, since being homosexual is not illegal in India, it is a huge encouragement for many members to come out and embrace their preferred

sexual identity. Additionally, most main study participants acknowledged that during the past five years, the Indian homosexual community has established itself and thrived on the internet, which has undoubtedly been the most accommodating platform they could have ever imagined. To develop tactics for their cause, they are creating NGOs, internet forums, WhatsApp groups, contacting hotlines, and holding frequent meetings. (Neha Dimri, Parag Goswami., 2017)

SOCIAL MEDIA ROLE IN MAKING LGBTQ VISIBLE IN INDIA

Social media users' cognitive processes and behaviors in the real world have been greatly influenced by these platforms. It has altered people's perspectives. Either a good or negative alteration may occur. Old laws that no longer apply to our modern world are superseded by new ones as we develop and change. One such modification occurred on this date last year when Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was read down. There have been several revolutions in the past when courageous people have stood up to demand change and get rid of preconceived ideas. The 'Stonewall Riots' were one such historic shift. In addition, we have witnessed Pride marches held all over the world throughout Pride Month, as well as the active advocacy for equal rights by activists for change. First off, Instagram again included rainbow story rings for stories that utilize Pride-related hashtags in 2020, just as it did in 2019. All Pride-related hashtags are now displayed in a rainbow color gradient in-stream. Instagram even updated its Stories with new features and stickers. Additionally, there are fresh visual effects that correspond with the Pride theme, which offers additional alternatives for various representations this year. A well-being guide for the LGBTQ community has also been released by Instagram, outlining the different tools and resources that can be found on the network. (Pawan Sunam.,2019)

DOES SOCIAL MEDIA BUILD OR BREAK IDENTITY?

This was one of many similar comments on a post made by 16-year-old self-taught Instagram beauty star Pranshu, who was discovered on November 21 hanging in his Ujjain residence. Although the cause of Pranshu's death has not yet been determined by the authorities, his friends and family firmly believe that he was the victim of cyberbullying. Pranshu, a gay man, used to share pictures and videos of himself on Instagram with traditional clothing, makeup, sarees, and nail varnish. Pranshu was wearing a saree in one of his Diwali postings. His comments area became overflowing with derogatory and abusive comments as a result. He allegedly used his mother's dupatta to hang himself a few days later when she was away from home. Pranshu had over 35,000 followers on Instagram, yet even after his passing, homophobic bullies continued to stalk his account. His family has since made the account private. Teenage suicides are not unusual, as demonstrated by Pranshu's example. The 2023 US National Poll on the Mental Health of LGBTQ Young People found that 41% of the 28,000 kids who participated in the poll had given suicide a serious thought in the year prior. The survey found that the majority of them experienced cyberbullying. The societal stigma does not go away, though. For LGBTQ+ individuals, talking to friends, family, and those in their inner circle can still be a difficult undertaking. These young people are discouraged from coming out before their parents because they fear not being accepted. According to IndiaToday, Budhiswatya Shankar Das is a research researcher on the LGBTQIA+ community and a former mental social worker at Assam Medical College and Hospital. In that, usually because they are afraid of being judged, young people find it easier to talk to strangers than to their relatives about their sexual orientation. Teens who identify as LGBTQ+ and are cautious in concealing their identities share movies and pictures on various Instagram profiles to express themselves. Although it is initially relaxing, there is a risk of homophobic trolling, which may be persistent at times. For young people who openly display their LGBTQ+ identification on social media, things are even worse. According to Budhiswatya Shankar Das, a mental health counselor for LGBTQ+ individuals facing mental health challenges, children who get parental support are better equipped to handle harassment based on their gender, both in person and online. It is not always simple to garner family support, though. Gender activist Ankit Bhuptani considers that familial approval or rejection can sometimes be grey rather than black and white.

According to Budhiswatya Shankar Das, teens who experience approval from their family turn to the outside world for the same kind of acceptance. Das continues, "But the world is not that kind enough." Ankit Bhuptani, a gender activist, thinks LGBT content makers should be able to handle social media responsibly. Gaining "thick skin" takes time to develop. Processing emotions sparked by trolls can be aided by seeking assistance from friends, family, or a therapist, according to Dordi. Self-care should be prioritized by limiting exposure to unpleasant comments and taking breaks from social media, according to Dordi. India does not yet have any laws that specifically protect against cyberbullying. Section 67 of the Information Technology Act does, however, address cyberbullying to some degree. It stipulates that publishing or sending pornographic content online might result in five years in prison and a fine of up to Rs 10 lakh. (Medha Chawla & Rishabh Sharma., 2023)

SOCIAL MEDIA ROLE FOR LGBTQ ADOLESCENTS

The most regular users of internet services, especially social media, are teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17. 66% of Australian secondary school students who participated in the poll said they used social media at least five times a day. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning (LGBTQ) youth utilize Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Snapchat more than any other social media network. Social media is used by young LGBTQ people for social support, identity development, entertainment,

and knowledge. Facebook and other social media sites make it enjoyable and simple to interact with LGBTQ communities, explore identity, and get emotional support. Social media may have a beneficial impact on one's feelings of identity, self-awareness, and self-worth. Social media has, meanwhile, also been linked to unfavorable incidents such as non-consensual sexting, exposure to hazardous content, cyberbullying, and confidentiality problems. Social media gives people access to a private or group communication area online, which is seen to be less dangerous than meeting in person. Through social media self-presentation and engagement, young people may investigate and develop their identities. An online and offline peer support network is created by older LGBTQ teenagers and young adults to help them overcome difficulties and improve their psychological health and well-being in the face of prejudice, social isolation, and stigma. On the other hand, gender-varied teenagers have frequently reported harmful and exclusionary actions on social media, indicating that social media is not always a secure place for them. Some LGBTQ adolescents may rather look for assistance online rather than confide in friends and family. As a result, LGBTQ kids may utilize social media to interact with LGBTQ networks and explore and grow their sense of self. One further reason LGBTQ teenagers choose to contact individuals online might be limited relationship possibilities. LGBTQ adolescents may use these social networks to get support and information as well. Youth who identify as transgender, for instance, might watch vlogs that detail medical procedures for gender affirmation or ask their peers for emotional support. Using these networks, LGBTQ adolescents combat the pervasive effects of a cisgender and heteronormative social environment by reducing feelings of stigma and loneliness. Social media can serve as a means of connecting LGBTQ people who reside outside of urban areas. Positive effects have been noted, but little is known about LGBTQ support networks on social media, including the advantages and reasons why LGBTQ teenagers use them. By attempting to get a deeper understanding of LGBTQ youth connections in both their online and offline networks, this study expands upon the little body of prior research. This research presents an investigation of how LGBTQ adolescents use social media to explore their identities and get support from other LGBTQ teenagers. (Matthew N. Berger, Melody Taba, Jennifer L. Marino, Megan S. C. Lim, Spring Chenoa Cooper G, Larissa Lewis, Kath Albury, Kon Shing Kenneth Chung, Deborah Bateson, S. Rachel Skinner., 2021)

LGBT WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE:

In the US, more than 8 million workers identify as LGBT.1. Numerous sources have reported on the detrimental effects of employment discrimination and harassment against LGBT individuals on workers' health and well-being as well as their level of dedication to and happiness with their jobs. The study uses a survey of 935 LGBT individuals that was done in May 2021 to look at experiences of harassment and discrimination in the workplace. Adult employees were evaluated for lifetime, five-year, and past-year discrimination as of March 2020—shortly before many firms were compelled to close due to COVID-19. As a result, this survey is among the first to collect data regarding experiences of employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the year after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Bostock v. Clayton County, holding that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination in the workplace against members of the LGBT community. The investigation shows that discrimination against LGBT individuals in the workplace is nonetheless pervasive and ongoing. At some time in their life, more than 40% of LGBT employees (45.5%) claimed to have encountered unfair treatment at work, such as being fired, rejected for employment, or subjected to harassment due to their gender identity or sexual orientation. In the last year, 8.9% of LGBT individuals in the workforce said they had been dismissed or turned down for a job due to their gender identity or sexual orientation; this percentage included 11.3% of LGBT workers of color and 6.5% of LGBT employees who were white. Those who disclosed their sexual orientation to at least some coworkers had a rate that was five times higher than that of those who did not (10.9% vs

2.2%). When it came to their employer or other employees, more than half (57.0%) of LGBT employees who had encountered harassment or discrimination at work claimed that their treatment was unjust and motivated by their religious views. In addition, a lot of workers said they changed their physical appearance or concealed their LGBT identity to avoid harassment and discrimination. A lot of workers also said they quit or thought about quitting their employment because of receiving unfair treatment. (UCLA.,2021)

ISSUES OF LGBT YOUTH IN INDIA

Although more Indian youths than ever before may accept homosexuality and queer identities today, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people still constantly struggle to be accepted for who they are sexually and to be free to openly express their gender choices within the boundaries of family, home, and school. In urban India, where corporate initiatives and social media have raised awareness of LGBT rights, the situation for gay men seems more hopeful than that of transgender people or lesbian women. Although there are various online and physical platforms where urban LGBT individuals may express their opinions, they are but a fraction of the numerous challenges this group faces. The LGBT community battles for equality and acceptance. It might be especially difficult for transgender people to find acceptance. The LGBT community faces discrimination regularly. This is a severe issue since discrimination against the LGBT community is pervasive. Because of their prejudices, many think that LGBT people are unusual and quite different. Although there are more Indian youth than ever who embrace homosexuality and queer identities, LGBT people still struggle to find acceptance in their

families, homes, and educational institutions. There have been reports of people coming out of the closet and informing their families they are not who they were raised to be. Many LGBT people face serious issues every year related to discrimination, assault, unemployment, poverty, and healthcare access. In a nation where strict social and cultural standards dictate the terms of marriage, education, and job, the emotional and physical health of LGBT people can suffer greatly from a lack of family support. Isolation and pressure to fit in can often lead to psychosomatic ailments, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Many of them would prefer to move to a different city to get away from the overwhelming pressure to get married and have a family. Families that accept their identities have many restrictions on how they may dress and interact with their partners. In the absence of family support, social media, and online groups have offered reachable substitutes for building a community beyond the family. (Aashank Dwivedi., 2022)

LEGISLATION FOR LGBT RIGHTS

Revoke of the IPC, 1860's section 377: The Supreme Court of India partially decriminalized Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 in the case of Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (AIR 2018 SC 4321), which was brought by the Constitutional Bench, presided over by Justice Dipak Mishra, who was the Chief Justice at the time. It was once prohibited for gays to engage in sexual activity by Section 377. The ruling was a little victory in the struggle for the equality and acceptance of LGBTQ people. In this decision, the Supreme Court has both defended the fundamental rights of the LGBTQ community and addressed the difficulties that it faces. In the KS Puttuswamy case, the Apex Court declared that the right to privacy is protected under Article 21.

The 2019 Act for the Protection of Rights for Transgender Persons: Transgender people are recognized in Indian mythology; but, throughout the British era, they faced discrimination and brutality, which added to their backwardness. Several decisions and legislation have been passed in an attempt to improve the transgender community's reputation. In the case of the National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, the Apex Court acknowledged transgender people as belonging to the third gender (AIR 2014 SC 1863). The first-ever measure safeguarding the rights of the transgender community was submitted in 2014 as a response to the most well-known verdict; sadly, it was not renewed in 2016. relationships with transgender people.

Transgender individuals can make the following reservations: In the case of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India AIR 2014 SC 1863, the Indian Supreme Court declared that transgender individuals are members of the third gender. This declaration makes the transgender person eligible for reservations under India's quota scheme. The Indian Constitution guarantees transgender individuals equal rights in terms of employment and education. (Aashank Dwivedi., 2022)

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Globalization has significantly impacted many aspects of human life, including culture, migration, identity, and how people view gender and sexuality (Altman 22). There is a noticeable conversation taking place in the present day around gender stereotypes and homosexual behavior. The conversation that is going on is changing how society views heterosexual standards and creating space for different sexual orientations to be acknowledged and accepted. As a result, the modern world deviates from conventional ideas of the gender binary and questions accepted heterosexuality norms. Being heterosexual, or "straight" as it is sometimes called, has historically required men to conform to a position that is considered manly, and women to project a feminine appearance (Srivastav 369). Within this viewpoint, being attracted to people of the opposite gender on a mutual basis is what defines heterosexual individuals. With the presumption that it is natural, this standard has historically dominated society. On the other hand, homosexuality, in which one's feelings and desires are focused on others of the same gender or both, defies social standards and is regrettably influenced by hegemonic prejudices. The public views homosexuality as abnormal, and those who are attracted to others of the same sex typically become marginalized and stigmatized. The conflicting views that society has about homosexuality and heterosexuality highlight the continuous need to balance changing views on gender identity and sexual orientation. The modern era's changing dynamics force established standards to be reexamined, promoting a more accepting and compassionate conversation about the range of gender and sexual manifestations. (Deepak Shah., 2023)

In affirmation of the themes delineated through a priori coding, there usually underscores the profound impact of stigma on individuals within the LGBTQ+ community. This impact manifests in enduring emotional states, including sadness, loneliness, fear, and helplessness, alongside the manifestation of clinical disorders, such as depression, exacerbating feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness. In extreme cases, the ramifications extend to contemplation of suicide. Notably, certain socio-economic contexts exhibit no discernible mitigation of these challenges. For example, individuals reported levels and types of stigmas that persisted in academic and familial domains, regardless of their socioeconomic status. However, depending on socioeconomic conditions, there were considerable differences in the level of support shown in friend groups and the general attitude of the community towards non-heterosexuality. It became clear that people with higher education and financial prosperity

received more support. This emphasizes how important awareness and education are in creating a supportive atmosphere. Significantly, the reach of this education goes beyond formal educational settings to encompass religious and traditional societies, where increased understanding plays a critical role in reducing the negative impacts of stigma and keeping people from experiencing exclusion. (Prajna Wankawalla and Shabari Shields., 2022)

Being familiar, aware, or understanding of someone or something—including information, abilities, or objects—is the state of knowing about them. Young people's perception of homosexuality is heavily impacted by their knowledge of sexuality and the LGBTQ community, which they can learn from a variety of media, including books, the internet, films, and videos. In a larger sense, acceptance encompasses how society views LGBTQ people as well as the general agreement on laws and regulations that are essential to eliminating violence and discrimination against them, encouraging their full inclusion, and protecting their wellbeing. Although homosexuality has always been a phenomenon, both its prevalence and public awareness have significantly increased in recent years. It has to do with the attraction or sex-related interactions between people. But historically, it has been a taboo topic in India. People unintentionally acquire the perception that homosexuality is an abnormality from an early age, which contributes to homonegativity disapproval of homosexuals in society. Individuals belonging to the LGBTQ community encounter numerous difficulties daily, including prejudice, physical mistreatment, difficulties obtaining employment, and a lack of acceptance from both family and society. They also have academic and scholastic challenges that are made worse by the homophobia, victimization, harassment, and bullying they experience. Because of the widespread abuse, they experience feelings of alienation and unwelcomeness in their communities, schools, and homes, which lowers their self-esteem and causes them to internalize homophobia. (Ayam Monika and Dr. Sampreety Gogoi., 2022)

The rise of social media has given members of the LGBTQ+ community and other sexual minorities a way to connect with and find online groups. However, transgender people frequently have difficulties when expressing their gender identification on online platforms because doing so puts them in danger of social injustice. Notably, transgender people perceive the expression of their gender identity in a varied and complex way since they identify as existing outside of the traditional gender binary. To 'pass' as traditional members of the gender binary, transgender people may use exaggerated manifestations of their

femininity or masculinity to conform to society's expectations regarding gender. To live up to expectations, this tactic runs the risk of feeding prejudice and possibly becoming the target of discrimination from others. By accepting a non-binary identity, they traverse the range of gender expression, combining and reducing features of both masculine identities. By giving children the freedom to express who they are both inside and outside of the conventional gender binary, this strategy promotes a more inclusive and diverse view of gender identity. The significance of social media as a venue for self-expression, community development, and the negotiation of varied gender identities is highlighted by this in-depth investigation of gender identity in online settings. (Rutten & Theresa., 2018)

A major focal point of the current study is Erving Goffman's groundbreaking research on self-presentation. In a famous quote, Goffman describes the tools and techniques used to create these representations, which are referred to as the "front": the aspect of a performer's work that always functions in a broad, conventional way to define the circumstances for the audience. Thus, the word "front" refers to the standardizing expressive apparatus that the performer uses, whether on purpose or accidentally, when performing. Goffman's significant impact on social computing and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) in general must be recognized. His ideas have had an important effect on these standardizing the conversation about human-computer interactions and how people express themselves in digital places. (Julia Deeb-Swihart, Christopher Polack, Eric Gilbert, Irfan Essa., 2017)

In the United States, a sizable segment of social media users actively engages on several sites. For members of the LGBTQ+ community, this means making decisions about how they express themselves not just on one platform but on other digital platforms as well. The process of self-presentation becomes more complex because of the judgments made within the occasionally intersecting platform contexts, each of which has its audiences, conventions, and affordances. Moreover, LGBTQ+ users face increased importance in how they show themselves online because of the possibility of stigma associated with their identity. The stakes are quite high, which highlights how crucial it is to make judgments about how one presents oneself that both minimize the possibility of stigmatization and efficiently enable the accomplishment of their objectives. This combination of complex surroundings and high stakes is still not adequately explored in the literature on self-minimization. Acknowledging and fully resolving this conglomeration of issues is necessary for a sophisticated comprehension and efficient assistance of the experiences of LGBTQ+ and other potentially

stigmatized users on social media. (Micheal A. DeVito, Ashley Marie Walker, Jeremy Birnholtz., 2018)

With the introduction of the World Wide Web, the LGBTQ community has developed a unique network of support that allows for contacts and discourse, which eventually materializes in online activism and events like Pride marches and protests. Additionally, the community can critically interact with and criticize existing legal norms, religious beliefs, and societal boundaries that support moral policing through the use of this digital platform. Many stories have surfaced over time, telling stories of acceptance and coming-out experiences.

People in the LGBTQ community are progressively letting go of fears, accepting their sexuality with pride, and setting higher goals for themselves. There is a noticeable change occurring, as heterosexual people in India are progressively getting to know their LGBTQ and non-binary peers in social settings such as friendships, families, neighborhoods, and work environments. The minority LGBTQ community's cohabitation with the larger heteronormative society represents a transformational development. This study paper documents and emphasizes the positive changes and greater acceptance that the impact of social media on the LGBTQ scene in India has brought about, and it is accompanied by an accompanying photo series. The LGBTQ community is advancing with a resolve to fulfill its dreams, propelled by an increasing sense of victory over earlier fears. The goal of this project is to provide an equal playing field on which all parties can engage in peaceful participation. (Neha Dimri, Parag Goswami., 2019)

According to (Adkins et al. 2018, Janzen 2017, and McConnell et al. 2017), LGBTQ+ individuals use social media platforms to find online groups, make new relationships, and access information that might not be easily found offline. It's important to recognize, though, that social media platforms can still be unfriendly and even hostile to LGBTQ+ people despite these advantages. Within this community, reports of hate speech, trolling, harassment, and threats of physical and sexual violence have been made (Mkhize et al., 2020; Scheuerman et al., 2018). Consequently, many LGBTQ+ individuals adopt a cautious approach to managing their expressions of gender on social media platforms (Hanckel et al., 2019). To navigate these challenges, individuals within the LGBTQ+ community employ various strategies, including the use of privacy and security controls, monitoring self-expression, managing friendship networks, creating multiple accounts, and curating and editing personal photographs. Additionally, there is a tendency to restrict LGBTQ+-related content to spaces

that offer greater anonymity (Duguay, 2016; McConnell et al., 2017; Vivienne and Burgess, 2012). Scholars studying online performances of identity often draw upon theories of digital personhood, frequently referencing Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of self to elucidate how individuals tailor their self-presentations to specific audiences. Danah Boyd (2002) acknowledges the value of maintaining multiple facets or performances for marginalized individuals, providing a source of relief and empowerment by finding acceptance and support in specific online communities. Subsequent research, exemplified by Marwick and Boyd (2011), delves into how certain social media platforms, like Twitter, may strip away contextual information, making it challenging for individuals to manage their online identities selectively and effectively. (Catherine V Talbot, Amelia Talbot, Danielle J Roe, Pam Briggs., 2020)

Social media platforms have proven to be beneficial for users, brands, and various communities, with a notable positive impact on marginalized groups, particularly the LGBTQ community (Janczak, 2017). The term LGBTQ encompasses Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer individuals, with the "Q" also representing "questioning" for those individuals in the process of discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity (Dastagir, 2017). This acronym is employed to describe sexual orientations that diverge from what is conventionally considered normal. Specifically, "LGB" pertains to sexual identities, "T" signifies gender identity, and "Q" can encompass both (Eliason, 2014). In the 1960s, homosexuality was pathologized as a mental disorder, but perceptions of the LGBTQ community have evolved over the years (Meyer, 2003). Previously, LGBTQ-identified individuals lacked platforms or communities where they could express their feelings without fear of judgment or attacks from homophobic individuals. Visibility remains a key challenge for the LGBTQ community, and it has become a central goal of the LGBTQ rights movement in contemporary times (Roth, 2015). The emergence of social media has provided the LGBTQ community with diverse avenues to communicate and engage with peers. Individuals unrestrained by physical limitations, or a lack of resources, or those questioning their identity can access valuable information through social media platforms (Janczak, 2017). This shift has contributed to a more inclusive and supportive environment for the LGBTQ community, allowing for enhanced visibility and connectivity beyond traditional physical boundaries. (Stephanie Sabala., 2020)

Consider the heightened media attention and moral apprehension surrounding the

phenomenon dubbed by both gay and straight communities as #GaysOverCOVID. In July 2020, an anonymous individual in their twenties, residing in Southern California and identifying as gay, initiated a social media campaign by creating an Instagram page (@GaysOverCovid). This page featured images of young gay men engaged in activities that

violated COVID-19 social norms and public health protocols. Initially, discussions surrounding the page were predominantly limited to gay individuals in California who were personally acquainted with those depicted. However, as the page gained more followers and expanded its documentation to include COVID-unsafe activities of gay men globally, it garnered international media attention and triggered contentious debates regarding its mission. The account manager and their supporters sought to justify the campaign as a project focused on "accountability." Activist and writer Zack Ford (2021) succinctly captured this stance in a tweet, stating, "I think it's reasonable to hold people accountable for needlessly endangering others, but perhaps especially when their capital is attention, admiration, and popularity." This sentiment echoes a pervasive and potent criticism of gay social media influencers that forms the foundation of #GaysOverCOVID's objective to hold them "accountable": LGBTQ public figures, due to their prominent roles and visible privilege, bear a heightened responsibility for exemplifying ideal ethical and political behavior (Brostoff, 2017). #GaysOverCOVID further intensified and publicized representational concerns long held about "Instagays" — gay influencers specializing in homoerotic self-representation and ranking among the most followed LGBTQ individuals on Instagram. Within LGBTQ communities, they have been a source of concern as perceived inadequate representatives of "the community," particularly concerning their potential to serve as positive role models for LGBTQ youth. Questions have been raised about their suitability as role models, with considerations such as, "Is the superficiality of Instagay culture genuinely something they should look up to?" (El Khatib, 2018, para. 9). In a notable statement, gay journalist Yashar Ali (2020) expressed his inspiration to "cancel" Instagays who were found socializing with Aaron Schock as part of an endeavor to "eliminate toxicity in the community." #GaysOverCOVID serves as a noteworthy social media phenomenon due to its exaggerated significance and framing as a "social drama" or a sequence of human agonistic behavior moving from contestation through ritualized procedures to the restoration of order, as described in Turner's (1987) conception. (Tyler Quick., 2021)

Brands have increasingly engaged influencers in their social advocacy initiatives through

influencer advertising on social media platforms. This study delves into the impact of influencer identity and comment sections within Instagram-based corporate social responsibility advertising, specifically focusing on a Pride collection that supports the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community. The research aims to investigate whether perceived influencer credibility, brand hypocrisy, and brand motive play mediating roles in the effects of influencer identity and comment valence. The findings indicate that LGBTQ-identified influencers are associated with higher perceived credibility and lower perceptions of brand hypocrisy, particularly among participants within the LGBTQ community. In contrast, non-LGBTQ influencers garner more positive ad attitudes and behavioral tendencies, especially among cisgender heterosexual non-LGBTQ participants. The study discusses theoretical implications and offers insights for practical applications in the realm of social advocacy through influencer advertising. (Minjie Li., 2021)

According to (Duguay.,2016) the LGBTQ community utilizes social media to share new understandings with the public and to actively participate in identity development. Prior research on the LGBTQ community has frequently concentrated on various aspects of how this group is seen and how to connect with them. The primary domains that have investigated these subjects are communication and psychology. Psychologists have studied how gender is viewed about racial and ethnic identities (Parent et al., 2013), the elements linked to the LGBTQ youth community's well-being (Higa et al., 2012), and (Galupo et al.,2014) analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of relationships spanning gender identity and sexual orientation. Additional research examined the impact of social media on its users. (Stephanie Sabala.,2020)

Social media gives people access to a private or group communication area online, which is seen to be less dangerous than meeting in person. Through social media self-presentation and engagement, young people may investigate and develop their identities. Through the creation of both online and offline peer support networks, older LGBTQ adolescents and young adults can overcome hardships and improve their psychological health and well-being in the face of prejudice, stigma, and social isolation. On the other hand, gender-varied teenagers have frequently reported harmful and exclusionary actions on social media, indicating that it is not always a secure place for them to be. Peer support, particularly within LGBTQ populations, has been identified as a critical protective factor against poor mental health. LGBTQ people are more likely to have alcohol and drug misuse, mood disorders (such as depression and

anxiety), PTSD, mental comorbidities, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Some LGBTQ adolescents may rather look for assistance online rather than confide in friends and family. As a result, LGBTQ kids may utilize social media to interact with LGBTQ networks and explore and grow their sense of identity. LGBTQ young people may also prefer contacting others online due to limited relationship possibilities. Through these social media platforms, LGBTQ adolescents may also get support and information. Youth who identify as

transgender, for instance, might watch vlogs that detail medical procedures for gender affirmation or ask their peers for emotional support. Using these networks, LGBTQ adolescents combat the widespread effects of a cisgender, heteronormative social environment by reducing feelings of stigma and loneliness. Social media may also serve as a means of connecting LGBTQ people who reside outside of major cities. Even though exploring different sexualities and genders on social media may be safer now than it was in the past, LGBTQ persons frequently describe bad experiences there, such as racism, abuse, discrimination, and coercion. Positive effects have been noted, but little is known about LGBTQ support networks on social media, including the advantages and reasons why LGBTQ teenagers use them. By attempting to comprehend LGBTQ youth connections in their online and offline networks, this study expands on the little body of prior research.

Some LGBTQ teenagers felt uncomfortable asking their parents or their offline social network, therefore they chose to get knowledge about sex, relationships, and sexual health from online sources, including social media. Participants often utilized Facebook and Tumblr as platforms to look for and share this information. Facebook was widely utilized, enabling users to send and receive information via direct messaging, posts, and groups. Posts and comments were the primary means of sharing information on Tumblr, which was less popular. Adolescents need social media to help them learn how to interact with others, form identities, and explore their surroundings. According to our research, LGBTQ youth use social media in ways that can improve their wellness. The usage of social media by LGBTQ people has drawn attention to areas where experts may provide help. Supporting wellness and enhancing mental health in this susceptible group is crucial. (Matthew N. Berger, Melody Taba, Jennifer L. Marino, Megan S. C. Lim, Spring Chenoa Cooper G, Larissa Lewis, Kath Albury, Kon Shing Kenneth Chung, Deborah Bateson, S. Rachel Skinner., 2021)

According to recent scholarly reports, sociologists are finding it more and more important to comprehend the function that digital technologies play in identity work (Baker & Walsh,

2018; Lupton, 2014; Mercea et al., 2018). This illustrates how commonplace online spaces are in our daily lives, as well as how we create and express our identities. Research also indicates that digital platforms are crucial to our private and intimate lives (Adams-Santos, 2020; Das & Farber, 2020). Furthermore, online spaces are utilized by gender and sexual minorities as a source of information and support, as well as for constructive personal growth and discovery, friendship-building (Manago & Vaughn, 2015), and understanding sexual culture (De Ridder, 2017; Wignall, 2022). Although digital platforms have a beneficial

function, sexual and gender minorities meet online harms and have difficulty navigating these places (Bezrah et al., 2012; Keighley, 2022). Due to the societal stigma attached to "non-normative"1 gender and sexual identities, prejudice that occurs offline is replicated online (Colosi & Lister, 2019; Todd, 2020). This article expands on previous debates by utilizing the results of recent research that aimed to investigate the experiences of sexual and gender minorities with online harassment. Using Hochschild's "feeling rules" and "framing rules," we further conceptualize online "performances" and experiences by emphasizing the competing discourses that minorities encounter when creating "front region" performances and the significance of "back region" spaces in promoting emotional reflexivity. First, as the arguments presented in this article emphasize the importance of feeling rules and framing rules (Hochschild, 1979) in the presentation of self, they further the application of Goffman's work by providing a space to investigate the narrative of feelings in the context of online front region "performance" (Goffman, 1959). While heteronormativity is ubiquitous and presents considerable obstacles for marginalized sexual and gender-varied individuals interacting in online spaces, digital platforms can help sexual and gender minorities have pleasant experiences. The work of Goffman and Hochschild will be covered in the next section of this article, along with its theoretical significance for investigating identity work. (Rachela Colosi, Nick Cowen, Megan Todd., 2023)

Content technology advancements have given rise to web-based programs referred to as "social media" that let users exchange and engage with content. Social media has become more and more integrated into people's everyday lives in the last several years, especially for the LGBT groups, who face widespread prejudice (Chow, Konda, Calvo, Klausner, & Caceres, 2017). The three-No policy, which stands for "No support, no prohibition, and No promotion," still views LGBT issues as very sensitive, especially in China (Wu, Mou, Wang, & Jasmine Atkin, 2018). Due to its ability to facilitate connection and active involvement,

social media is a phenomenon that may empower LGBT groups (Cannon et al., 2017; Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2004). According to Wu et al. (2018), it can assist LGBT people in constructing social structures that foster intimate relationships amongst those minorities both virtually and in person. Social media is used by LGBT populations for a range of purposes, such as communication, identity development, companionship, and sex (Ceglarek & Ward, 2016; Miller, 2015). Anecdotal evidence suggested problematic use of social media had become common among a large proportion of users and led to significant behavioral and psychological problems, including loss of productivity, feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression (Wang, Lee, & Hua, 2015). While many LGBT people spend too much time on social media and are heavily dependent on it, there is evidence that social media use is problematic for a large portion of the LGBT community. Consequently, given that social media is becoming more and more popular among LGBT communities, it is important to investigate social media dependency and whether it benefits LGBT users offline in China, where there are general restrictions on LGBT topics and an official policy of silence (Wu et al., 2018). Studies in the past have investigated how LGBT groups utilize social media. Lesbian and homosexual expats reported that social media helped with their acculturation (McPhail and Fisher, 2015). Baams, Jonas, Utz, Bos, and Van Der Vuurst (2011) and Adkins, Masters, Shumer, and Selkie (2018) found that social media was essential for transgender teenagers and other members of minority groups to look for online support and health information. (Xi Han, Wenting Han, Jiabin Qu, Bei Li, Qinghua Zhu., 2018)

Children now live in a sophisticated and technologically complicated culture. They learn early on how to handle the demands and difficulties of the virtual environment. An essential aspect of human nature is the need for acceptance or validation. The urge to be liked is important during adolescence because it helps kids feel more confident. Since the beginning of time, people have compared themselves to others and have always felt the desire to be liked. Adolescence is a critical and transitory time in life when changes occur on all fronts (psychological, emotional, and physical). A youngster requires affirmation for his social, emotional, and physical development throughout this stage of fast growth and development. Over the past ten years, social networking services have proliferated. Two key components of social networking sites are feedback from other users and acceptance. On social media, people spend a lot of time looking for approval. Teens use images, tales, humorous videos, blog posts, instructional videos, and articles to affirm their ideas, points of view, beliefs, and

physical characteristics. Their personality is being significantly shaped by social media, which is also enhancing their social-emotional development. This paper adds to the current conversation on teens' use of social media, their desire for validation, and the effects this has on their self-esteem. It would be fascinating to see if social media and social networking sites have contributed to the improvement of self-esteem in teenagers and whether they have exacerbated the urge to be liked, popular, and famous. (Radhika Dhingra & Babita Parashar., 2022)

The phrase "validation" refers to acknowledging or confirming the worth or validity of an individual, their thoughts, or feelings. Even before the invention of social media, humans have always sought approval. As we become older, we often look to our friends and the surrounding culture for confirmation of our physical attractiveness. Initially, we seek it emotionally and psychologically from our parents and instructors. Everybody wants to be that poster child, or at least date one. Before social media, people expressed their gratitude by honking their cars, a practice that was eventually outlawed by 'Rule 112 of the highway code'. Back then, a male would frequently give someone a wink or wolf whistle to indicate his approbation of their physical or sexual attractiveness. Being as forthright as males was seen as unladylike by some.What a waste of equality. What is genuine, as far as the eyes can see? What is counterfeit? When you look at real photos of attractive men or women, you will see that many individuals don't value their attractiveness; instead, they want to improve it by utilizing photo editing and design tools to replicate their looks and gain popularity. These individuals must learn to love and care for themselves, as well as to be appreciative of their health and ability to better themselves. Everything is in a state of equilibrium. By taking some time to reflect, searching within for the solution, and receiving treatment, you may find a deeper purpose by achieving mental, emotional, and spiritual balance. (NATALIE BLEAU.,2021)

A person's firmly held feeling of being a man, woman, or another gender (such as nonbinary), which occasionally may not correspond with the sex given at birth, is known as their gender identity. People who identify as transgender may suffer from gender dysphoria, a severe kind of suffering brought on by the discrepancy between their internal gender identity and their assigned sex. The stress of being a minority in a majority social context, which is promoted by institutions, social processes, and structures that harass and/or discriminate, can also be highly experienced by TGNB people. Minority stress among young people who identify as

TGNB can take the form of violence brought on by gender nonconformity, gender dysphoria, familial conflict, and emotional discomfort stemming from rejection fears. It is also linked to a higher risk of suicide and mental health issues. From 25% to 32% of TGNB kids make suicide attempts at this time. Research on TGNB youngsters indicates social media may be a protective element rather than a danger for mental health, despite widespread worries about the impact of SMU on adolescent mental health. TGNB people interact with the media in different ways for different purposes. Though TGNB people are less commonly and appropriately represented in the mainstream media than cisgender people are, TGNB people can show themselves any way they deem fit on social media. Young people who identify as TGNB use social media to access a range of information, forging bonds with one another and forming networks of support that guard against mental illness because of shared experiences and interests. (Sarah M. Coyne, Emily Weinstein, J. Andan Sheppard., 2023)

The acronyms for LGBT, LGBTQ, and LGBTQIA are defined in the study article "An Analysis of LGBTQIA+ University Students' Perceptions about Sexual and Gender Diversity," which was completed in 2021. Women who are generally attracted to other women are called lesbians. Gay people are people who prefer the same sex and are often used to refer to guys who are attracted to men. Bisexual people could find themselves drawn to people of different genders. Transgender people identify with the opposite sex from that of pornography. It is unrelated to sexual inclinations. Individuals that identify as queer do not conform to social norms or heteronormativity in terms of sexuality. A person with intersex is genetically predisposed to have both male and female genitalia from birth, and any sexual activity that causes them discomfort is considered sexual. They are not drawn to their partner's physical attraction (Sánchez et al., 2021). In addition, those who identify as intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or with any other minority gender identity or sexual orientation are referred to as LGBT (Government Equality Office, 2018). While the phrase "LGBTQ" does not encompass everyone who refers to people in the smaller group, it is widely acknowledged to cover those who are particularly unidentified when using the acronym "4L." Overall, the word LGBT has been adopted over time and has tremendously improved the inclusion of disadvantaged persons in the greater community (Shankle & Michael, 2006; Alexander et al., 2004). This refers to the emerging definition of social media that emerged in the fields of public relations, information science, and mass communication, among other specialized fields. Digital technology is primarily the subject of social media

concepts, with a focus on user-generated content or interactions (e.g. Terry (2009) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)). According to Kent (2010), social media involves emphasizing the characteristics and stating the message's direction explicitly on Facebook or Twitter to increase the volume and kind of connections (Howard & Parks, 2012). Russo, Watkins, Kelly, and Chan (2008) define social media as "media that supports online communication, networking, and/or collaboration." According to the essay in Hayes's Philosophy (Ph.D.) (2014), social media are Internet-based platforms that let people interact with both large and small audiences who value user-generated content and are aware of their interactions with others, in real-time or asynchronously, and communicate opportunistically and selectively.

The LGBT movement mostly uses social media to spread information that empowers and encourages members of the LGBT community to come out. This self-assurance helps relieve the strain that comes with being a member of the LGBT community in Vietnam, where numerous biases exist, even among FPT University students. The study team discovered that LGBT activities on social networks that enable gender disclosure can have an impact on young students' lives, particularly those who are still financially reliant on their parents, after speaking with some FPT students about coming out. (Nguyen Ngoc Ky Anh, Hoang Van Hoan, Nguyen Duy Long., 2022)

The experiences of LGBTQ adolescents are being studied more and more in a range of contexts, including the home, community, and educational setting. The LGBTQ youth literature can be arranged using a more comprehensive, systemic framework. The ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner can offer the systemic lens required to enable a manner of thinking for the investigation of links between systems. According to the concept, a person's development is seen as a complicated web of relationships and interactions between the systems that surround them. Bronfenbrenner proposed the following systems: Microsystem (1), Mesosystem (2), Exosystem (3), Macrosystem (4), and Chronosystem (5). In a nutshell, the microsystem is made up of the immediate stakeholders—peers, family, etc.—who interact with the individual directly. The interactions between a person's microsystems, such as parents talking with educators, are included in the mesosystem. The ecosystem is made up of surroundings or stakeholders that do not directly contain the individual but rather have an indirect impact on them through their microsystems (e.g., workplace in the family). The cultural elements that affect a person's development, such as class and race, make up the macrosystem. The chronosystem is made up of normative and/or

non-normative environmental shifts that can affect a person's development throughout their lifetime (such as the COVID-19 epidemic and the transition from elementary to high school). Comprehending the diverse systems encircling the person enables the investigation of the connections among the systems (such as mesosystems). Numerous studies have shown that the discrimination and victimization faced by LGBTQ adolescents at school pose a variety of dangers to their socioemotional well-being, education, and health. Peer isolation, a lack of social support, a lack of interest in school, poor academic performance, dropping out of school, stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and suicidal thoughts and attempts are some examples of these. But instead of problematizing young people as being at-risk, a new study is focusing on the structures that generate and bear the risks for LGBTQ adolescents, then

examining from a positive lens to start delving into the needs of the LGBTQ community in schools. The focus of recent studies has shifted to positive aspects and resources for LGBTQ adolescents. For instance, an LGBTQ youth's high school experience ran more smoothly when they had a supportive adult in their lives (i.e., lower absenteeism, and higher academic involvement). (Enoch Leung, Gabriela Kassel-Gomez, Samantha Sullivan, Flavio Murahara & Tara Flanagan.,2022)

To analyze queer representation in film, Queer Cinema: Schoolgirls, Vampires, and Gay Cowboys examines the social and political forces that shape these cinematic trends. The essay makes the notion that gay relationships can eventually become more accepted in popular society because of gay films. Through her engagement with the term "queer," Mennel (2012) believes that the queer community is reclaiming the term and broadening the scope of her discussion to encompass identities and sexualities beyond gay and lesbian. Mennel (2012) asserts that "… Queer also signifies the deconstruction of identity, proposing that its very notion relies on bounded coherence that imposes exclusions and limitations on subjectivity," (69). Mennel recognizes the cultural ramifications of the notion of queerness by addressing it and moving beyond the binary classification of straight, gay, or lesbian. The expectations of cis-gendered heterosexuality in society are necessary for the notion of queer to be valid. Also, Mennel (2012) contends that the text's examination of cinematic queer representations allowed readers to participate in the critical conversations that accompany representation— namely, whether is it accurate and sufficient—and helped to normalize the diverse range of experiences that queer people of all identities have. Analyzing queer TV episodes and characters to determine how they may be understood and how this medium might be

explained, Daniel Marshall (2016) writes in Reading Queer Television: "as a generative object of critical and political interest" (18). Marshall (2016) notes the significant advancements made by LGBT representation, which are now commonplace in most mainstream media. Although there has been a noticeable increase in the number of representations, Marshall (2016) also notes that viewers are frequently led to accept stereotyped depictions of gender and sexual differences as normal, which can have a regressive effect on the advancement of acceptance towards queer people. (Katelyn Thomson., 2021)

The trend of more LGBTQ+ people appearing in the media is a positive step forward for the community, but there is still a long way to go. The reduction and cancellation of recent series have had a disproportionate impact on queer representation on television; hence, it can be more difficult to discover LGBTQ+ inclusive content to support inclusive brand messages. In a time when consumers are searching for companies and content they can relate to, audience data is crucial, and personal marketing is the way of the future. This Nielsen study looks at how consumers who identify as gender nonconforming feel more at ease with companies addressing them based on their gender identity and/or sexual orientation than do cisgender consumers. Streaming is the industry leader in media content. Despite the dearth of LGBTQ+-related video material, 87% of it can be found on streaming platforms. Both heterosexual and LGBTQ+ viewers see traditional TV shows and films as noticeably less inclusive than shows and films on streaming platforms. More than 25% of viewers worldwide think that promoting inclusion and telling uplifting tales will enhance the representation of LGBTQ+ people in advertisements and other media. Sixty-four percent of viewers felt that the items and content were relevant when they did get personalized advertising based on their gender identity or sexual orientation. 87% of representative material is available on streaming platforms, with Black LGBTQ+ content leading the way in terms of community representation. (Nielsen., 2023)

In the last 20 years, the number of LGBT characters on American television has skyrocketed, going from nearly nonexistent to hundreds on broadcast, cable, and internet streaming. Evidence of this shift in representation style may be seen in content analysis research done in the early 21st century. These studies have mostly utilized the frequency of remarks or jokes regarding sexual orientation and the portrayal of homosexual characters in sexual contexts as indicators of how stereotypical or accurate gay characters are portrayed. A study of twenty-

two sitcoms on broadcast and cable programs from the Autumn 2000 television season was done by Gregory Fouts and Rebecca Inch. 2% of the 125 main characters that were analyzed were found to be gay (Fouts and Inch 40). The homosexual characters that were identified were all male, with two of them being white and one being black (Fouts and Inch 40). Compared to heterosexual characters, each of these characters made a lot more remarks regarding their sexual orientation. Fouts and Inch contend that this "reinforces common stereotypes that emphasize differences rather than similarities between homosexual and heterosexual individuals (41)." Gay characters were far less likely than their heterosexual counterparts to be depicted engaging in sexual relations, even though they made more

remarks about their sexuality (Fouts and Inch 42). Overall, the 2000 study by Fouts and Inch discovered that LGBT characters were underrepresented and lacked variety. In their paper "Stereotype or Success," Amber Raley and Jennifer Lucas analyze nine prime-time broadcast series from the 2001–2002 season that included homosexual characters regularly to paint a picture of LGBT representation. Bisexual characters appeared to be nonexistent, and transgender representation was not explored (Raley 28). The study concentrated on how lesbian and homosexual characters interacted with kids, were the brunt of jokes, displayed physical affection, and were portrayed negatively. Not necessarily with a partner or someone of the same gender, Raley and Lucas saw 22 acts of love from homosexual characters: eight embraces, four "shown in bed together, no sex implied," four handshakes, and four kisses (30). 123 acts of affection were displayed by heterosexual characters: 54 kisses, 49 embraces, 15 handshakes, and 5 "shown in bed together, sex implied" (Raley 30). The disparities in how physical closeness is presented demonstrate that, even in 2001, homosexual individuals were still mostly portrayed in restricted positions. Raley and Lucas did note that there was no discernible difference in how homosexual and straight characters interacted with kids, "which can be seen as a major advancement over past stereotypes of gay males and lesbians as dangerous child molesters" (31). The research by Raley and Lucas demonstrates the progress made by the LGBT community in 2001, as well as the issues that remained. Bisexual representation has either not been discovered in prior content analysis research, or it has been combined with gay representation. Netzley justified this by claiming that straight individuals rarely differentiate between gays and bisexuals when developing judgments, and that prejudice and discrimination faced by both groups are comparable (Netzley 974). Research, however, indicates that bisexuals experience additional prejudice from within the lesbian and gay community and that heterosexuals see them more negatively than homosexuals (See, for

example, Herek, Israel and Mohr, Johnson, Matsuda, et al.). Consequently, the differences between gay and lesbian representation and bisexual representation should be examined in this field of study. (Carson Cook., 2018)

The public's opinions are greatly shaped by the media. The things that media sources choose to portray as "good" and "normal" determine what is viewed as such. When it results in the acceptance of frequently marginalized groups, this may be a good thing. Negative preconceptions can be strengthened, though, if cultures are underrepresented or are portrayed poorly. The way members of certain groups view themselves and others can be influenced by the media. Children's media that presents inclusive stories may make a big difference. It is indisputable that kids and teenagers are impacted by their environment just like adults are. They are susceptible to impressions. They will utilize the tales and examples given to them to shape their viewpoints as they are figuring out who they are and where they fit in society. Seeing individuals who resemble them or who have gone through comparable circumstances might aid in the development of their sense of self-worth and identity. It may also make them feel less alone or isolated and have an effect on their self-esteem. According to a 2019 Ofcom study, children were already viewing 12.7 hours of TV per week on average by the time they were 3–4 years old. Children between the ages of 3 and 17 worked up to 46.1 hours each week. Positive portrayal is important for young children who are exposed to media from an early age, including television. LGBTQ+ children and young people find it easier to affirm their experiences when they see themselves depicted in the media as honest individuals. Additionally, it promotes a culture where people are at ease being who they are. Therefore, even if LGBTQ+ populations have been more represented in recent years, we still need to take into account how they are portrayed. Some LGBTQ+ characters and storylines have historically—and even now—been reduced to damaging stereotypes. Regarding how they look, how they behave, or what issues they have, they are grouped. The tokenization of LGBTQ+ characters is one problem. Rather than showcasing LGBTI tales and people on par with straight ones, they are tacked on to narratives as a last thought. This might also apply to narratives in which LGBTQ+ characters are not often the protagonists. Children and young people's poor self-perceptions might result from consuming media that exclusively portrays one kind of hero. We at Action for Children recognize our role in fostering positive representation and providing a secure atmosphere for youth who identify as LGBTQ+. We choose to collaborate with individuals who have similar values to ours because we think it's

crucial that the work we generate be varied as well. Dr. Ranj, one of the biggest celebrity supporters, frequently uses his platform to help the LGBTQ+ community. He's giving them a voice and sharing his experiences with the limitations placed on his sexuality as a child. Positive portrayal is necessary for it to succeed; characters must be more than just two-dimensional caricatures. For many people, LGBTQ+ figures are a source of solace or pride. Even if there have been advancements, we may continue to advocate for change. Children should be exposed to a varied range of media, including video games, books, periodicals, television shows, and films. (Elijah Cruz., 2024)

Social media is gradually taking the lead as the primary means of information acquisition for individuals in the information era, thanks to the Internet's explosive growth. Due to the open nature of the Internet, comments made by users on various items are very subjective and can even drive traffic. There will be some exaggeration and fabrication. Social networking platforms allow users to view other people's opinions about many topics, which may sway users' own opinions. Regarding LGBT culture, it is a relatively small minority in China and is not widely acknowledged by the general population. Many believe it to be unethical and inconsistent with Chinese culture. First, some individuals disparage and denigrate works about LGBT culture that have been depicted in novels, films, and TV series on social media without being aware of them. Second, some individuals observe things with preconceived conceptions and make remarks with colored eyes that discriminate against minorities due to the effect of China's historical national circumstances. It is simple for the general people to misinterpret and become hostile. It can be seen from an examination of the history and evolution of word-of-mouth and cognitive theory that word-of-mouth influences psychology, action, and acceptance, among other areas of cognition. To examine this issue, the research created a questionnaire to find out how many good and bad remarks there are about LGBT individuals on social media sites, as well as whether or not such remarks will have an impact on people's opinions. The hypothesis and the conclusion are the same. Some people's opinions of LGBT culture have changed as a result of the remarks they have read.

Firstly, remarks might create a positive or negative initial impression for those who are unaware of the LGBT lifestyle. Second, there is a chance that a secondary editor may combine comments that are more motivated by their interests than by malevolent intent due to the media's promotion of inclusivity and diversity, as well as advancements in science and technology, text, image, video, and other formats. It is simple to adopt a biased viewpoint,

which can even have an impact on people's actions and psyche and lead to horrible incidents like network violence. Subsequent actions might focus on promoting new, better-coping strategies and increasing public awareness of the issue. Training social media algorithms may be used to detect, categorize, and filter online material. Additionally, individuals might recognize the growth of LGBT culture and prevent themselves from being influenced by the remarks of others. (Wanding, LiJiahui, LinJiayu Zhang., 2022)

There is a shift in attitudes towards those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). There has been a noted cultural shift in America, with people now preferring social equality (Pew Research Centre, 2013). As more people come out as LGBT to their friends and family, more Americans can put stereotypes behind them. LGBT people see their position as a benefit rather than a drawback in society (Hewlett, Sears, Sumberg, & Fargnoli, 2013). However, the lack of progress in creating inclusive work settings has led to a decrease in the retention of LGBT employees (Fullerton, 2013; Pizer, Sears, Mallory, & Hunter, 2012). Organizations must lessen and avoid "invidious bias and discrimination, eliminate negative conflicts, avoid waste, and increased fairness" in light of the rising LGBT turnover rate (Ferdman & Deane, 2014, p. xxi). To improve outcomes for more individuals, organizations, and society as a whole, organizational leaders must use the human capital of every employee (Hewlett et al., 2013). According to Nishii (2013), fostering an inclusive atmosphere is crucial for lowering conflict in varied work groups. Leonardelli and Toh (2011) found that employees are more willing to work together when they believe leaders treat colleagues from diverse groups fairly in the workplace. Empirical research confirms that LGBT workers face discrimination in the workplace despite advancements in social justice and the law (Platt & Lenzen, 2013; Rabelo & Cortina, 2014). In addition, they see discrimination, harassment, marginalization, seclusion, and decreased pay ("Homophobia in the Workplace," 2012; Out Now Global, 2013; Rubin, 2011). In addition, they work in hazardous circumstances where they may encounter managers who ignore offensive remarks or jokes made by coworkers or superiors (Movement Advancement Project, 2013). (Darin Dale Stephens., 2018)

RESEARCH GAP

The lack of a thorough examination of the effects of social media especially Instagram on the image portrayal and identity-building of LGBTQ individuals is a noteworthy research gap in the body of literature already available.

Understanding different digital platforms, such as Instagram, to further strengthen the identity and positive representation of LGBTQ individuals and the creation of status among the new generation is crucial given the notable changes in understanding audience behavior over the years.

The literature analyses an array of topics related to LGBTQ+ presence on social media, such as the effects of stigma, how social media fosters community, and the challenges transgender people have voicing themselves. However, there seems to be a lack of awareness regarding the connections between identity and social media use among LGBTQ+ people.

Research must be done to explore how gender identity, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and geographic habitation connect to LGBTQ+ identity online and how these interactions affect people's attitudes, actions, and experiences on social media platforms.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION:

Social media platforms have become essential tools in today's digital landscape, enabling people to interact with groups globally and express themselves freely. Instagram is one of these platforms that is particularly well-known and where a variety of voices may share stories, pictures, and experiences. Instagram has been instrumental in promoting self-expression, advocacy, and visibility among the LGBTQ+ community. This introduction lays the groundwork for an examination of the various ways that Instagram influences how the LGBTQ+ community portrays gender and identity. Instagram allows users to customize their lives through well-chosen photos, stories, and profiles, acting as a virtual gallery. This platform gives many LGBTQ+ people a safe space to explore and express their sexual orientation and gender identity. Users can create a supportive online community, fight prejudices, and affirm their identities using hashtags, captions, and visual images.

WHAT IS RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The practical "how" of a research study is referred to as a research technique. To be more precise, it concerns the methodical ways in which a researcher plans a study to guarantee accurate and trustworthy outcomes that answer the goals, objectives, and research questions. Every official academic research work, such as a dissertation, thesis, or journal article, has a research technique chapter or part that addresses the aforementioned topics. Crucially, a strong methodology chapter explains the methodological decisions used as well as their rationale. Stated differently, the methodology chapter should provide evidence for the design decisions by demonstrating that the strategies and tactics selected are most appropriate for addressing the goals, issues, and purposes of the study. Methodological approaches can be classified as either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed, depending on whether they emphasize words, numbers, or both. Although this is a bit of an oversimplification, it provides a useful foundation for comprehension. While quantitative research concentrates on measuring and testing using numerical data, qualitative research focuses on gathering and evaluating words (spoken or written) and textual or visual material. Additional "softer" data items, such as body language or visual components, might also be the subject of a qualitative study. As opposed to this, when the goals and questions of the study are confirmatory, a quantitative technique is usually employed. A quantitative technique, for instance, might be used to test a set of

hypotheses or evaluate the relationship between two variables, such as personality type and likelihood of committing a crime.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

This study aims to investigate how LGBTQ individuals are portrayed visually on Instagram, with a particular emphasis on the content, themes, and patterns that are commonly used on different social media platforms, especially on Instagram. Also, intends to clearly understand the varieties of images and videos typically associated with LGBTQ identities on Instagram using a descriptive analysis of a representative sample of posts tagged with LGBTQ-related hashtags. Through an examination of variables including the demographics of content producers and topic material, this study aims to evaluate a broad picture of the visual representation of LGBTQ people on Instagram. The goal of this descriptive research is to further our understanding of how Instagram influences the representation of LGBTQ people through images that are visible online**.**

AIM OF THE STUDY:

To examine Instagram's complex role in influencing how gender and identity are portrayed within the LGBTQ+ community. This includes examining how it affects activism, self-expression, community involvement, and the upholding or challenging of cultural norms and stereotypes. The study intends to offer insights into the opportunities and challenges presented by Instagram as a tool for LGBTQ+ individuals to assert their identities, advocate for inclusivity, and navigate digital spaces through qualitative analysis of user-generated content, engagement patterns, and platform policies. The study's ultimate goal is to further a sophisticated knowledge of how social media, identity development, and LGBTQ+ advocacy connect in the digital age.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

What are Users & Gratification Theory?

According to the uses and gratifications theory (UGT), people pick the media they consume based on the gratifications they hope to receive from it. Unlike other media theories, UGT places more emphasis on the media consumer than on the medium or the ideas it spreads. UGT views individuals as active media consumers who are conscious of the reasons behind their media consumption decisions, in contrast to other theories that see people as passive

recipients of media messages. The origins of UGT can be traced back to the 1940s when communication scholars initially sought to study why specific media and content appealed to different people. The theory was further expanded in the 1970s when researchers started examining not just the gratifications that consumers sought but the gratifications they obtained. The idea that audiences actively select the media they receive is a fundamental component of UGT. Additionally, audiences choose media that will satisfy their wants and desires since they are knowledgeable of the causes behind their media consumption. Although UGT is still often employed in media research, there are several reasons why it has been criticized. First, research that uses self-report data has been made possible by UGT's conviction that audiences are informed and capable of explaining why they choose to consume media. Self-report information isn't always precise or informative, though, and it's not always dependable. Secondly, people's ability to freely select the media they consume is constrained by the media that are readily available to them. Given that there are more media options than ever before, yet not everyone has access to them, this critique could be even more pertinent today. Third, UGT ignores the limitations and bounds of media messages and the potential effects on individuals by concentrating on the audience. Lastly, there has been discussion on whether UGT is too inclusive to qualify as a theory.

The use of Users and Gratification Theory:

According to the users and gratifications idea, people consciously select media and communication channels to satisfy particular wants and desires. The study may investigate the different reasons LGBTQ people use Instagram and how they interact with the network. This might involve looking for amusement, making connections with like-minded people, discovering and expressing one's identity, and staying up to date on LGBTQ-related problems in addition to seeking out social support. According to this notion, people choose media information based on what suits their needs and interests. The study can pinpoint the satisfaction sought by LGBTQ Instagram users by examining the kinds of material they interact with and consume. Users could interact with information that, for instance, validates and affirms their identities, presents a variety of LGBTQ experiences, or presents chances for activism and community involvement. The notion of users and gratifications acknowledges that various audience segments could have unique patterns of satisfaction and motives. Within the LGBTQ community on Instagram, the research can investigate how various subgroups interact with the site and seek out the satisfactions they desire, such as those based

on age, gender identity, or cultural heritage. To better serve the varied demands of LGBTQ users, this segmentation can assist in identifying tactics that are specifically designed for community growth, platform design, and content production. The idea also recognizes the range of impacts that media consumption may have on people's identity development and general well-being. The study can look into how various platform usage patterns (e.g., frequency, length, forms of engagement) affect outcomes like psychological well-being, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging in the context of LGBTQ Instagram users. This investigation might help clarify the possible advantages and disadvantages of Instagram use for LGBTQ people. LGBTQ users on Instagram may assess their interactions with the network regularly depending on the satisfaction they get and how well their requirements are being addressed. In addition to providing insights into how user feedback and adaptations impact users' continuous interactions with Instagram, the study can help content producers, platform developers, and legislators improve the site's usefulness and relevance for LGBTQ users. According to the hypothesis, people actively evaluate their media encounters and modify their behavior as necessary. LGBTQ users on Instagram may assess their interactions with the network regularly depending on the satisfaction they get and how well their requirements are being addressed. In addition to providing insights into how user feedback and adaptations impact users' continuous interactions with Instagram, the study can help content producers, platform developers, and legislators improve the site's usefulness and relevance for LGBTQ users.

OBJECTIVES

1. To Examine the Representation of LGBTQ Identities on Instagram.

2. To Evaluate the Impact of Instagram on LGBTQ Identity Formation.

3. To Investigate Perceptions and Experiences of LGBTQ Users on Instagram.

METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology employed for the study titled "An Empirical Study on the Role of Instagram in LGBTQ Gender Identity and Portrayal" incorporates a qualitative approach to delve into the multifaceted realm of Instagram influencing Gender Identity. Data collection for the qualitative segment involves a multifaceted approach, including direct observation of the influencers' content, and analysis of audience interactions and engagement patterns. These

qualitative data sources offer valuable contextual insights and perspectives that complement the analysis.

LIMITATIONS:

1. Due to possible challenges in obtaining an accurate representation of LGBTQ+ people with a variety of intersecting identities, the study may be limited in its ability to examine sampling bias.

2. The findings may not apply to larger groups or circumstances due to variables like cultural differences, regional variances in LGBTQ+ acceptance, and platform usage patterns.

3. The results of the study could soon become out of date given how swiftly Instagram and LGBTQ+ discourse is changing.

4. When gathering sensitive data from LGBTQ+ people, in particular, the study may run into ethical issues with informed permission, privacy, and confidentiality.

5. The study's sample representativeness may be impacted by technical access restrictions that prevent some LGBTQ+ demographic segments from participating, such as restricted internet connectivity or lack of access to computers and cellphones.

6. Social media algorithms can create echo chambers, perpetuate negative narratives, and erase fewer common identities by unintentionally reinforcing preconceptions or limiting exposure to varied viewpoints within the LGBTQ+ community.

7. Social networking sites may help LGBTQ+ adolescents connect with peers and build support networks, but they also put them at risk for discrimination, harassment, and cyberbullying—all of which can be harmful to their mental health and general well-being.

8. Relying too much on social media for approval and encouragement might unintentionally lead to a lack of coping mechanisms and resilience when faced

with offline obstacles, which can make it harder to navigate relationships and interactions in real life.Because social media sites, like Instagram, are for-profit businesses fueled by advertising income, it is possible that LGBTQ+ identities may be commodified and used for financial gain, jeopardizing the integrity and authenticity of online communities.

9. LGBTQ+ kids who rely heavily on social media run the danger of losing out on offline social contacts and community participation, which can result in a sense of detachment or separation from real-world experiences. However, online groups can provide invaluable support and connections.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS

It is revealed that LGBTQ youth's mental health and well-being are influenced by various social media platforms in so many ways. A common subject that came up was peer connection, with participants emphasizing how crucial online groups are for creating a feeling of community and camaraderie. Social media also made identity management easier by providing a safe space for people to explore, express, and validate their gender identity and sexual orientation. The importance of social support networks made through online interactions was also highlighted by the participants. These networks offered consolation, guidance, and emotional support at difficult moments.

The management of LGBTQ+ identities and social media use are closely related, highlighting the hazards and opportunities that come with interacting online. Social media platforms present opportunities for marginalized people to gain support and acceptance in certain communities, but they also put users at risk of widespread online harassment and discrimination. The development of interventions promoting online safety and well-being among LGBTQ+ youth can be informed by researchers' deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of online identity management among this population. This can be achieved by utilizing theories of digital personhood and self-presentation.

Hashtags have become more than just tools for organizing content in the digital era; they are effective tools for creating communities and identities. Hashtags are mostly used for labeling and organizing content, but they also greatly impact how people perceive themselves and the community. Hashtags are a powerful tool for finding and interacting with people who share similar interests, especially in marginalized areas like the queer community. This helps to strengthen one's feeling of cultural identification and belonging.

The transformative effect of hashtags in influencing people's perceptions of themselves and creating a feeling of community within marginalized populations is shown by this qualitative analysis. People can strengthen their sense of self as members of the queer community by connecting with others who have similar experiences and cultural backgrounds through the smart usage of hashtags like #gay. Participants actively participate in the creation and propagation of community identity by liking and sharing the work of other LGBT people. This fosters an online ecosystem of support that may be absent from their offline communities. Hashtags help create inclusive online spaces where marginalized voices may be

heard and celebrated by giving people a forum to express themselves genuinely and connect with others who have similar identities. Additionally, because hashtag usage is participatory,it gives people who might otherwise feel excluded from their offline communities a sense of agency and belonging by giving them a voice and a platform to express themselves online.

The results show that social media is an essential coping strategy for LGBTQ kids who are socially isolated in rural areas. It gives them the chance to interact with like-minded people and look for support. Participants underlined the value of interacting with information created by people who have similar experiences as well as the relevance of positive representation of LGBTQ people and groups on social media platforms. Additionally, it was found that making use of the different platform features—like groups, live streaming, and messaging—was crucial to encouraging positive interactions and lowering participants' feelings of isolation.

Interventions that focus on improving positive representation, connecting people with similar experiences, and making efficient use of platform features can empower LGBTQ kids living in rural areas and help them feel like they belong in online networks.

The @officalhumansofbombay account on Instagram provides a positive platform for the community to represent their real self to the public without hesitation and be who they are. The page helps the LGBTQ+ community get more exposure and representation in the media by showcasing a variety of viewpoints and experiences. It takes this representation to dispel stigma, dispel misconceptions, and advance inclusivity and acceptance. The page shares stories that enlighten readers about the experiences that LGBTQ+ people have on the streets of India. It brings attention to matters including mental health, family acceptance, equality for LGBTQ+ people, and prejudice.

Furthermore, although hashtags are praised for their capacity to bring people together around shared identities and interests, filtering and shadow-banning may undermine their efficacy. Research indicates that hashtags about LGBTQ+ issues are often prohibited or restricted on several social media sites, which restricts the visibility of information produced by and for the community. This censoring, which views LGBTQ+ information as intrinsically improper or harmful, not only stifles the prominence of LGBTQ+ perspectives but also upholds stigma and prejudice. LGBTQ+ youth's dependence on social media as a coping strategy, especially for those living in remote or socially isolated locations, highlights more widespread systemic problems with access to support networks and mental health resources. Although virtual

communities can offer priceless emotional support, they shouldn't be used in place of thorough mental health treatment. Studies show that LGBTQ+ people, particularly young people, experience disproportionately higher rates of mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. This emphasizes the critical need for inclusive, easily accessible mental health services that are suited to the particular requirements of the community. In conclusion, social media sites like Instagram give LGBTQ+ people never-before-seen chances to connect, express themselves, and fight for change, but they also come with several serious drawbacks, such as censorship, algorithmic bias, and the commercialization of LGBTQ+ identities. It is critical to address these problems and seek to create more welcoming, equal, and encouraging online spaces for all LGBTQ+ people if we are to fully realize the promise of social media as a force for good in society.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

The study clarifies the complicated relationship that exists between Instagram, online identity management, and LGBTQ+ individuals. It highlights how important social media is for LGBTQ+ people, especially those living in underprivileged or rural locations, in terms of establishing peer relationships, creating a sense of community, and offering critical social support networks. Furthermore, it draws attention to the revolutionary power of hashtags as instruments for fostering inclusivity, amplifying the voices of the marginalized, and establishing and sustaining cultural identities within the gay community. The results show how crucial it is to identify Instagram as a vital way to cope for LGBTQ+ youth who are experiencing social isolation, particularly in rural areas. Social media platforms serve as a vital resource for people who are looking for acceptance, support, and a way to connect with other like-minded individuals by facilitating interactions, information exchange, and positive representation.

Adolescents need social media to help them learn how to interact with others, form identities, and explore their surroundings. According to our research, LGBTQ youth use social media in ways that can improve their wellness. The usage of social media by LGBTQ people has drawn attention to areas where experts may provide help. It's critical to enhance mental health and promote wellness in this susceptible group.
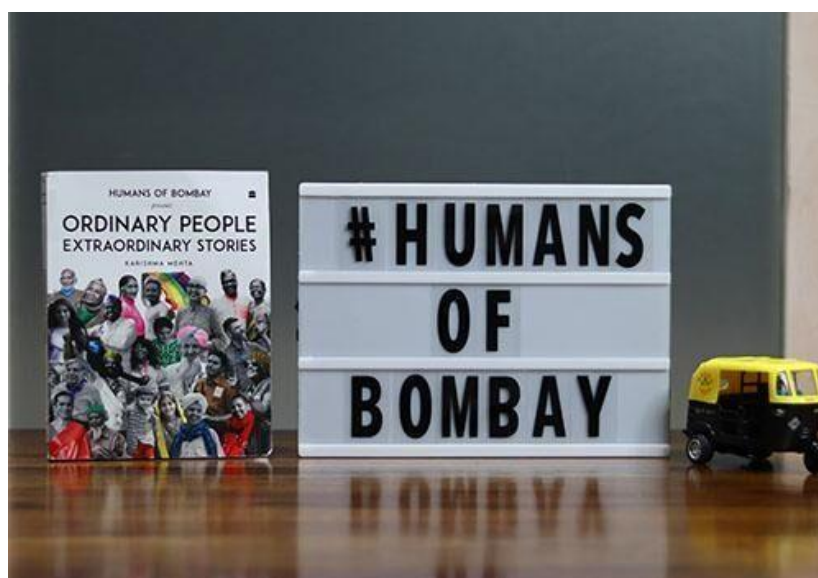
Additionally, the study emphasizes how important it is for LGBTQ+ people to have a safe and accepting environment on social media sites like Instagram, where the

@officialhumansofbombay account serves as an example. These platforms help de-stigmatize LGBTQ+ identities, debunk myths, and encourage greater acceptance and inclusion in society by elevating various perspectives and experiences.

The research concludes by highlighting the intricate relationships that exist between social media use, LGBTQ+ identification, and online community formation. It acknowledges the inherent hazards of online harassment and discrimination while highlighting the empowering potential of social media platforms in giving marginalized people a forum to explore, express, and confirm their identities. In the future, LGBTQ+ youth need community connections, good representation, and online safety initiatives to help them feel flexible, independent, and like they belong in online environments. By embracing the transformational potential of Instagram, we can establish online spaces that are more welcoming and encouraging for LGBTQ+ individuals to grow.

DISCUSSIONS:

The debate around Instagram's impact on LGBTQ gender identity and representation is complex, including issues of self-expression, community development, and the difficulties LGBTQ people encounter online. First and foremost, the study emphasizes how important Instagram is as a forum for LGBTQ people to investigate, express, and find validation for their gender identity and sexual orientation. To promote a feeling of community and belonging, it offers a place where people may construct their online identities, share their experiences, and interact with like-minded others.

The study provides insight into the function of Instagram in supporting identity development and self-affirmation among the LGBTQ population by looking at how LGBTQ people use the site. Additionally, the study explores how LGBTQ people are portrayed on Instagram, considering the range of identities and experiences that exist within the community. It looks at how LGBTQ identities are asserted, stereotypes are contested, and visibility is increased via the use of hashtags, captions, and visual images. The study also looks at how much Instagram captures the subtleties and complexity of LGBTQ gender identities, taking into account intersectionality, cultural variances, and changing perceptions of gender and sexuality. The report also recognizes the difficulties and dangers LGBTQ people encounter on Instagram, such as censorship, discrimination, and online abuse.

It examines the effects these difficulties have on LGBTQ users' mental health and general

well-being, emphasizing how crucial it is to provide welcoming and secure online environments. The research also looks at how digital activism and advocacy may help solve these issues, looking at how LGBTQ people can mobilize online to combat prejudice, create awareness, and encourage social change. It's crucial to talk about the study's conclusions while taking policy and practice into account. This entails encouraging digital literacy and online safety, creating resources and support services for LGBTQ people, and pushing for increased platform accountability and openness. The findings may also help shape programs and interventions that support LGBTQ people on Instagram by encouraging resilience, fighting prejudice, and promoting positive portrayal.

It is critical to strike a balance between the views of respect for LGBTQ people's bravery in expressing who they are and worries for their well-being and moral treatment. The goal of the research should be to pinpoint tactics and solutions that lessen the dangers of online harassment, discrimination, and exploitation while fostering an atmosphere that is safe, encouraging, and empowering for LGBTQ people on Instagram.

All things considered, an empirical investigation of Instagram's influence on LGBTQ gender identification and representation offers insightful information about the opportunities, difficulties, and experiences LGBTQ people encounter in digital environments. Through an analysis of Instagram's influence on LGBTQ identity and representation, the study advances our knowledge of the intricate relationships that exist between digital media, identity development, and social change within the LGBTQ community.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. Understanding the curation and distribution of material on social media platforms requires transparency regarding algorithms. By revealing the workings of their algorithms, platforms may build user confidence and show their dedication to equity and diversity. Furthermore, by making platforms answerable for their algorithmic biases, we can guarantee that they actively seek to lessen any discriminatory effects.

2. Engaging members of the LGBTQ+ community in the content moderation process can help platforms make better judgments by offering insightful information on the subtleties of LGBTQ+ material. In addition to fostering cultural awareness, community-driven moderation initiatives may guarantee that LGBTQ+ views are respectfully and honestly expressed.

3. To promote empathy and understanding, platform managers and users must be educated about LGBTQ+ problems and the effects of online platforms. Through increasing consciousness regarding algorithmic prejudice, censorship, and the significance of LGBTQ+ portrayal, interested parties may collaborate to establish an online space that is more welcoming to all.

4. Enacting laws that forbid discrimination in online settings is essential to guaranteeing that LGBTQ+ people get just and equitable treatment. Governments may hold platforms responsible for discriminatory actions and offer redress to impacted users by passing laws that forbid discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

5. Programmes for digital literacy enable LGBTQ+ kids to use the internet securely and sensibly. Through educating users on subjects like online harassment, privacy settings, and mental health resources, these programs provide users with the tools they need to defend themselves and get help when they need it.

6. Social media companies may provide LGBTQ+ users with complete support services by partnering with mental health specialists. Users may easily and discreetly seek help by incorporating mental health services directly into the platform, which lowers obstacles to care and promotes well-being.

7. Platforms must provide a voice to the varied LGBTQ+ community and make sure that everyone is included. Through the active promotion of content created by LGBTQ+ producers and the display of diverse experiences, platforms can confront misconceptions and cultivate an online community that is more inclusive.

8. Acknowledging the intertwined identities within the LGBTQ+ community is crucial in tackling the distinct requirements and obstacles encountered by marginalized communities. Advocating for LGBTQ+ issues using intersectional approaches guarantees that initiatives to enhance representation and support are fair and inclusive of all community members.

9. To solve urgent concerns confronting LGBTQ+ users online, collaborative research efforts bring together stakeholders from academia, industry, and advocacy organizations. These projects can produce insightful information on the intricate dynamics of online identity and guide evidence-based treatments by pooling resources and expertise.

10. Promoting legislative modifications that safeguard the rights and welfare of LGBTQ+

individuals is imperative to establish a more inclusive digital landscape. Advocates may contribute to ensuring that social media platforms respect the rights and dignity of all users, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, by striving to influence platform rules and industry standards

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