The Impact of Social Media Technology on Manipulative Marketing Potential

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study gives a deep understanding of changing ways of manipulative marketing in the presence of social media to assess the tendency of viewers of getting influenced and changing their opinions. This paper endeavours to meet challenges to develop a definition of manipulation that addresses how social media technology facilitates manipulative practices. The term "online manipulation" is used to highlight the particular class of manipulative practices enabled by a broad range of information technologies. We aim to contribute to philosophical accounts of manipulation with our conceptual and normative work by clarifying the nature of manipulative practices and drawing attention to the new universe of manipulation cases that information technology raises. Beyond philosophical accounts, however, our work engages with law and policy debates and aims to guide efforts to struggle against the destructive impacts of manipulation.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Study is conducted among 132 young respondents of age group 18 to 35 years and few mature adults. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire. Convenience sampling was used to collect the data. All data was collected through online access.

Findings: The maximum social media Apps used by people in Delhi and NCR are Whats-App, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram in descending order. On social media if respondents like the content of the post too much, they either share it or forward it in their group. Maximum respondents forward the messages of Positivity to their friends, followed by General Jokes and Political memes and news. Only 16 % of respondents received messages from specific social media groups for any kind of recognition (like digital badge) for forwarding messages of that group. Such messages are received from News Group or online shopping groups. 37% respondents agreed that sometimes they feel influenced with these groups whereas only 5% said that they are very much influenced.

Originality/Value: The paper uses secondary and primary data both for this study. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire. The data collected is analysed through MS Excel using charts.

Paper Type: Empirical Research Paper.

Introduction

Manipulation is a hidden influence which requires considerable skills and knowledge. To change the view of the world, new techniques of manipulation are often applied. This effect was directed to the psychic structure of a person and was aimed to change the thoughts, motifs and goals of people in the right or wrong direction. To change people's relation to certain events social media is actively used. Since social media deals with information, information control allows one to manipulate mass consciousness very easily. Manipulation can be applied to texts, speeches, audio, video and photographs. For a better understanding of how the mechanisms of manipulation of consciousness work, consider some features of perception of information and the influence of social stereotypes on the behaviour of the individual. This paper is about how the customers or the viewers get manipulated by the techniques and the mechanisms of social media technology used by the organisations to stimulate them. At the same time, it advances some suggestions about the diminishing of the manipulative practices.

Manipulative Marketing

The concept of manipulative marketing is, if anyone, the media, government, marketers, online business owners, manipulates a person into believing something (s)he does not believe. Our mind works continuously in a subconscious state. All the time, it takes a tremendous amount of information. There is no day when it does not take information subconsciously, tussle with it and make a thought process on the back of it. While going through any social media app like, Facebook, Instagram or watching a video on YouTube channel, our brain does not actually understand what is going on. The viewers take information in, but does not necessarily understand the message whether it's true or not and subconsciously form beliefs and perceptions on everything. Marketing Manipulation deals with the tactics and strategies used by marketers that prey on human cognitive, social and memory-based biases ultimately influencing their views and hence behaviour in their favour.

The marketing is directing the business according to the point of view of the customer. In other words, the company should focus permanently on the consumer's needs. But, the companies have their own objectives which many times are far from aligning with what the consumers need and quite often don't hesitate to make up marketing solutions which misconduct or deceive the consumers, in order to achieve them. Robert Noggle's influential theory says that one manipulates another by causing their beliefs, desires, or emotions to deviate from certain ideals.

Robert Goodin places the notion of hidden influence at the centre of his theory of manipulation. "One person manipulates another," he writes, "when he deceptively influences him, causing the other to act contrary to his putative will." The digital companies study consumers and increasingly personalize every aspect of the consumer experience. Furthermore, rather than waiting for consumers to approach the marketplace, the company reaches consumers anytime and anywhere. The result of these and related trends is that firms can not only take advantage of a general understanding of cognitive limitations, but can uncover and even trigger consumers' weakness at an individual level.

Support of Social Media Technology in Manipulation marketing

This study gives a deep understanding of changing ways of manipulative marketing in the presence of social media to assess the tendency of viewers to get influenced and change their opinions.

In addition to providing insight into vulnerabilities that advertisers, employers, and political campaigns may want to exploit, social media technology makes it gradually easier to leverage those insights. As Karen Yeung argues, digital platforms facilitate "Big Data-driven decision guidance techniques," which constitute a kind of "hyper nudging."

The reason Coke became the giant today is because it creates omnipresence through billboards, TV spots, newspaper ads, etc. The company knew if consumers see the brand enough, an attachment will be formed to it. Observing U.S. election in 2016, the tactics used, and the conspiracies built on the back of it like "fake news." Political groups built momentum by targeting specific "bubbles" of people, and it grew from there as things that may or may not have been true were made to feel true. And it is true that perception becomes reality.

Actually companies, governments and religions have targeted "bubbles" through social media. As a species, the consumers are kept to attach to such "bubbles", known as hobbies, political beliefs, entertainment, age/peer groups, interest, religion, etc. Any company through social media platforms like, Google or Facebook, with access to the right algorithm, can target or re-target and manipulate these bubbles of people.

Therefore, as one browses social media, one doesn't actually understand what's going on and accepts it, without understanding the message or the question whether it's true or false, becomes an autopilot, and subconsciously forms beliefs and perceptions on everything.

Similarly Amazon also manipulates consumers into buying certain products. The media manipulates consumers into believing or not believing in a new agenda or campaign. Politicians manipulate masses into forming certain perceptions or prejudice. Therefore, consumers cannot escape this and the best part is that consumers get to choose on their own.

The most successful entrepreneurs are conscious about how they use manipulation in marketing. They don't feel guilty about doing it, and neither should anyone feel so, if it is done properly giving a positive impact on consumers. While visiting Amazon to purchase a product, consumer buys that product for which he/she had never thought about and starts liking it very much. It happens because Amazon recommended it to the consumer during searching. In the same way, while using Facebook, people generally come across an influencer or thought leader whom they start following. It happens due to Facebook targeting approach to the customer with one of his or her messages. This is why manipulation in marketing is successful and social media encourages it with faster speed.

Literature Review

There is growing evidence that consumers are influenced by Internet-based opinion forums before making a variety of purchase decisions. Firms whose products are being discussed in such forums are therefore tempted to manipulate consumer perceptions by posting costly anonymous messages that praise their products.

It was considered revolutionary when shelves were busted in the 1950s with ready meals and prepared food. According to the Ford (2016), initially launched RTE foods were intolerably exciting and exotic, and things were magical. About almost one decade ago, at that time people only imagined ready to eat and prepared food aisle in the local supermarket, but now, this image is changed completely. According to the report of Euro monitor (2017), innovation, Premiumization and attention on quality has increased which driven a market of ready to eat for refreshing and increasingly getting dominated by the private producers and labels of products. Moreover, standards are raised by manufacturers for what prepared offers and ready to eat must look alike.

There is existence of settings where online forum manipulation benefits consumers. Nonetheless, firms are locked into a "rat race" and forced to spend resources on such profit-reducing activities; if they don't, consumer perceptions will be biased against them. The social cost of online manipulation can be reduced by developing "filtering" technologies that make it costlier for firms to manipulate. Interestingly, as the amount of user-contributed online content increases, it is firms, and not consumers, that have most to gain from the development of such technologies. (DANCIU V, 2016)

Consumers' perceptions of marketing and the extent to which they believe that marketing can play a positive transformative role in society. (Teresa Pereira Heath, 2012)

Companies are increasingly allocating more of their marketing spending to social media programs. Yet there is little research about how social media use is associated with consumer–brand relationships. Use of social media was positively related with brand relationship quality and the effect was more pronounced with high anthropomorphism perceptions. (Simon Hudson, 2016)

Instagram influencers with high numbers of followers are found more likeable, partly because they are considered more popular. Important, only in limited cases, perceptions of popularity induced by the influencer's number of followers increase the influencer's perceived opinion leadership. However, if the influencer follows very few accounts him-/herself, this can negatively impact popular influencers' likeability. Also, cooperating with influencers with high numbers of followers might not be the best marketing choice for promoting divergent products, as this decreases the brand's perceived uniqueness and consequently brand attitudes. (Marijke De Veirman et al, 2017).

Bomprad and Baranowski (2007) counsel that 5 values drive the acutely aware customers and these area unit health and safety, honesty, convenience, relationships and doing smart. When the companies create unsupported claims or over promise advantages, they risk breeding distrust. The companies got to learn the teachings rising from the values of acutely aware consumers and their evolution within the future and build advertising messages accordingly. Real progress can be created within the advertising in several other areas.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the detailed concepts of manipulative marketing.

- To see whether social media interaction is associated with increased efficiency of manipulative marketing or not.

- To analyze which type of social media app/site(s) is most successful in influencing the viewers through manipulative marketing.

Research Methodology

The respondents of the study are youth population of age group 18 to 35 years and few mature adults of Delhi and NCR. Total 160 questionnaires were circulated online out of which 132 deemed to be fit and complete for analysis. Convenience sampling technique was used to collect data, all data was collected through online sources.

To analyses the data with the help of questionnaire, following tools were used-

- Questionnaire

- Percentage and pie charts

- MS Excel Formulas

Analysis and Interpretation
Respondents' demographics and behaviour

The questionnaire link was sent to respondents. As it has been mentioned in the earlier chapter, the electronic questionnaire link was posted to respondents through WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. The analysis was done on 132 respondents. Male respondents were 55% and female respondents were 44%.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Numbers	Percentage
Male	59	45%
Female	73	55%
Total	132	100%
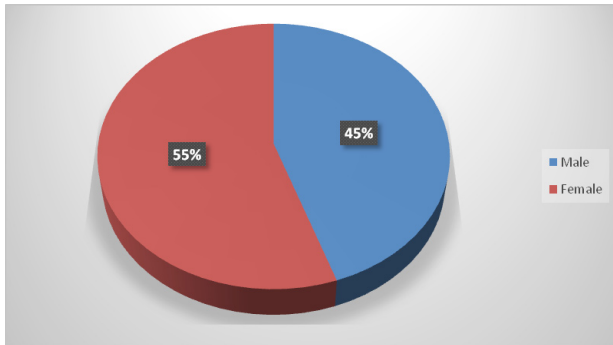
Fig 1: Gender of Respondents

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age	Numbers	Percentage
between 18 and 24 years	43	33%
between 25 and 30 years	53	40%
between 31 and 35 years	16	12%
more than 35 years	20	15%
Total	132	100%
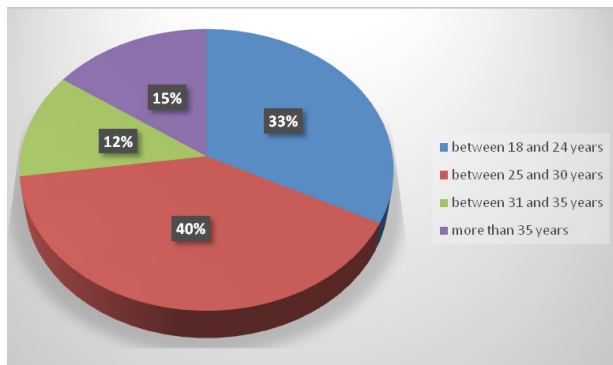
Fig 2: Age of Respondents

Additionally, 15% of the respondents were more than 35 years old, 12% of the respondents between 31-35 years old, 33% of the respondents between 18-24 years old and 40% of the respondents were 25-30 years old.

Table 3: Qualification of Respondents

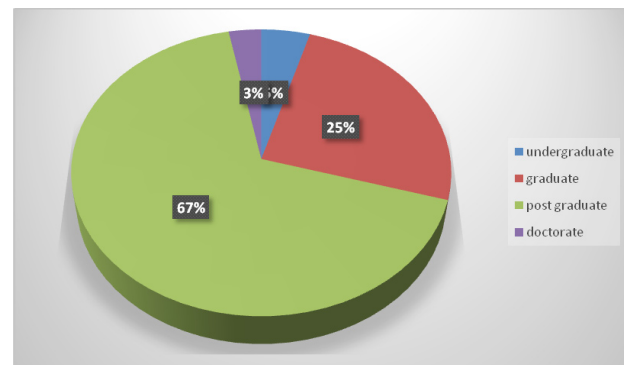| Qualification	Numbers	Percentage
Undergraduate	6	5%
Graduate	33	25%
post graduate	89	67%
Doctorate	4	3%
Total	132	100%

Fig 3: Qualification of Respondents

67% of the respondents are post-graduate which contributes the maximum and 25% respondents are graduate, 5% are undergraduate and 3% are doctorate.

Table 4: Time spent on social media

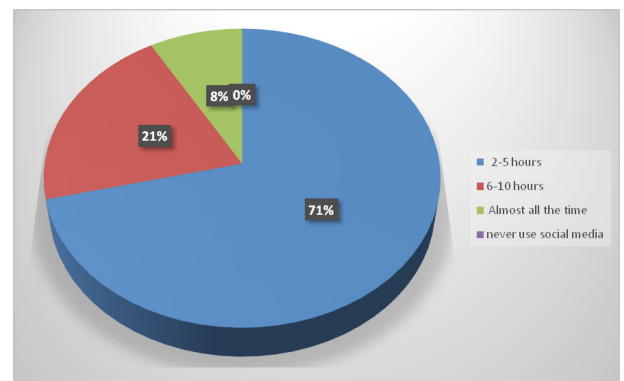| Time spent on Social Media	Numbers	Percentage
2-5 hours	94	71%
6-10 hours	27	20%
Almost all the time	11	8%
Never use social media	0	0%
Total	132	100%

Fig 4: Time spent on social media

As per the responses, 71% respondents spend about 2-5 hours on social media in a single day, 21% respondents spend about 6-10 hours on social media, 8% respondents admitted that they are almost all the time on social media whereas none of the respondents were found who never use social media.

Table 5: Social media Apps used by Respondents

Types of App	Numbers	Percentage
News	88	67%
Twitter	30	23%
Facebook	95	72%
WhatsApp	123	94%
LinkedIn	68	52%
Youtube	107	81%
Instagram	102	77%
Snapchat	3	2%
Others	5	4%
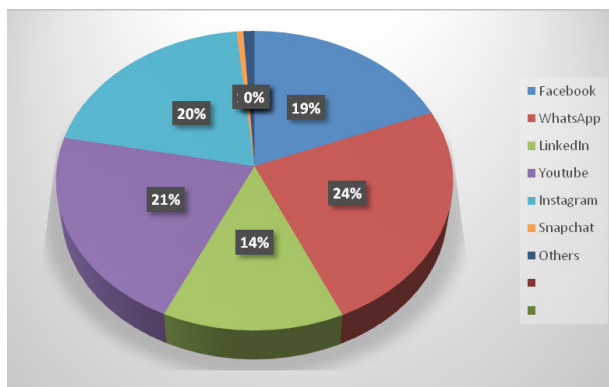
Fig 5: Social media Apps used by Respondents

As per the pie chart generated from the responses, it is analyzed that 94% of the respondents spends most of their time using WhatsApp, followed by 81% on YouTube, 72% on Facebook, 78% on Instagram, 67% on News, 52% on LinkedIn and a very small amount of people spend time on Snapchat, Online Games and Google.

Table 6: Topics of interest of Respondents

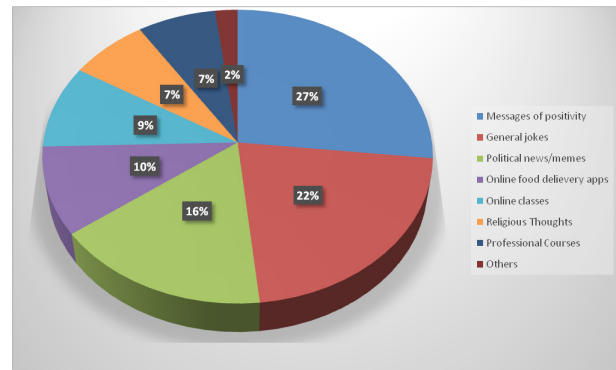| Topic	Numbers	Percentage
Messages of positivity	105	81%
General jokes	85	65%
Political news/memes	65	50%
Online food delivery apps	38	29%
Online classes	36	28%
Religious Thoughts	28	22%
Professional Courses	28	22%
Others	8	6.40%

Fig 6: Topics of interest of Respondents

81% of the respondents have interests in Messages of positivity followed by 65% people forwarding general jokes, 50% forwarding Political memes/news, 29% in online food delivering apps, 28% in Online classes, 24% in Religious thoughts, 22% in Professional courses and a small amount of people have interests in Original user generated content, Current affairs, sarcasm, hobbies related post and motivational quotes.

Table 7: Liking of Information

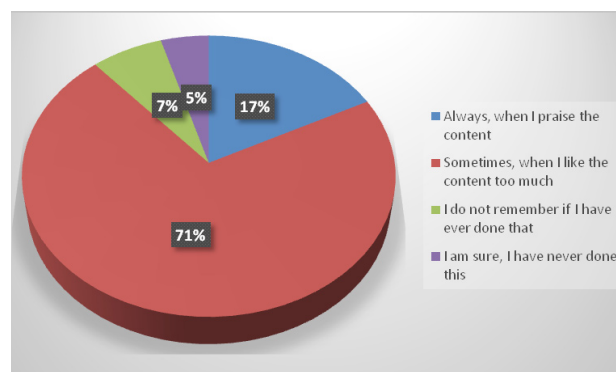| Liking of Information	Numbers	Percentage
Always, when I praise the content	23	17%
Sometimes, when I like the content too much	94	71%
I do not remember if I have ever done that	9	7%
I am sure, I have never done this	6	5%
Total	**132**	**100%**

Fig 7: Liking of Information

71% of the respondents admitted that they press the like button on Shares/Forwards sometimes when they like the content and 17% likes always when they praise the content, 7% respondents do not remember and 5% respondents are sure that they have never done this.

Table 8: Frequency of posts on social media

Frequency of Posts	Numbers	Percentage
Yes, always	42	32%
Yes, sometimes	70	53%
I did not pay attention to it, So I do not Know	16	12%
No, it never happened	4	3%
Total	132	100%
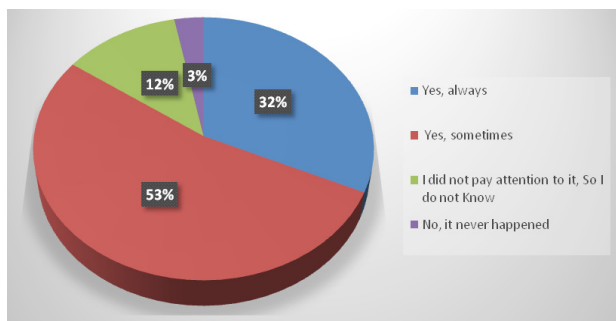
Fig 8: Frequency of posts on social media

Now, talking about the frequency of posts on the same topic which the respondents liked comprises of 53% experience it sometimes, 32% experience it always, 12% do not pay attention to it whereas 3% respondents claims that they never experienced it. This shows that maximum people either like or forward the post to their friends or groups which they really like.

Table 9: Recognition of a group on social media

Recognition of group	Numbers	Percentage
Yes, multiple times	20	15%
yes, 1-2 times	17	13%
I do not remember	45	34%
No, I did not come across with such a message from any group on social media	50	38%
Total	132	100%
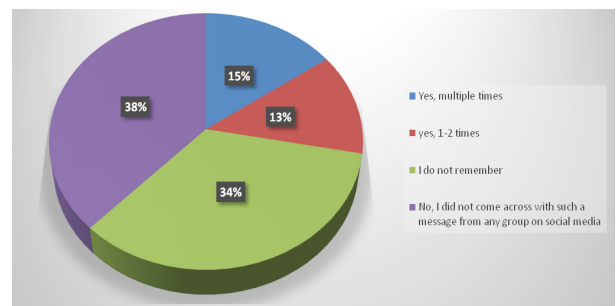
Fig 9: Recognition by a group on social media

It has been noticed that social media groups offer a top fan badge or some other benefits to their frequent users and the same has been answered by the respondents and the analysis suggest that 38% of the respondents have never experienced such benefits, 34% of the respondents does not remember such thing, 15% of the respondents have experienced this multiple time and 13% of the respondents have experienced is 1-2 times. It shows that few social media groups try to influence their regular viewers to spread the posts related to that particular group and in return the groups award them in some or the other manner.

Table 10: Types of groups which gave Recognition

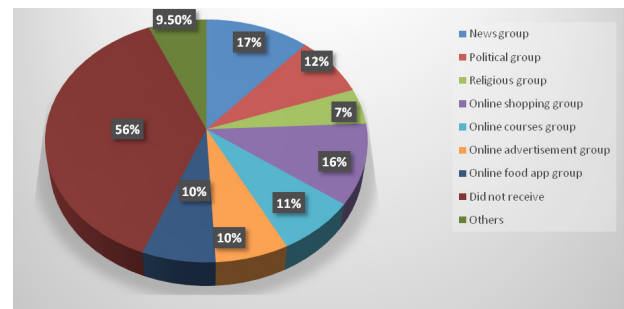| Type of Group	Numbers	Percentage
News group	22	17%
Political group	16	12%
Religious group	9	7%
Online shopping group	21	16%
Online courses group	15	11%
Online advertisement group	13	10%
Online food app group	13	10%
Did not receive	72	56%
Others	11	9.50%

Fig 10: Recognition by a group on social media

All the respondents who have experienced special benefits have stated that 56% of them have not received any invite from any group, 17% have been invited by news group, 16% from online shopping groups, 12% from political groups, 11% from online courses group, 10% people have been invited from online advertisement and food app groups both. Also, it has been calculated that a small number of respondents have been invited by memes group, Facebook groups or a quote p

Table 11: Influence from groups

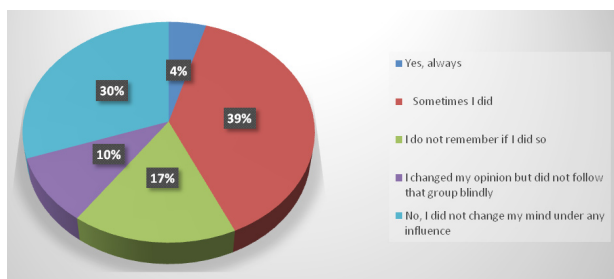| Influence from group	Numbers	Percentage
Yes, always	6	5%
Sometimes I did	51	39%
I do not remember if I did so	22	17%
I changed my opinion but did not follow that group blindly	13	10%
No, I did not change my mind under any influence	40	30%
Total	132	100%

Fig 11: Influence from groups

39% of the respondents have agreed that they have been influenced by the shares and sponsored posts on social media groups, 30% respondents never felt influenced by such posts, 17% respondents don't remember anything of this sort, 10% people were influenced but didn't followed that group blindly and the remaining 5% respondents have agreed that they have always been influenced and started following that group immediately.

Table 12: Level of influencer

Type of group	Numbers	Percentage
News group	33	29%
Political group	20	17%
Religious group	21	18%
Online shopping group	30	26%
Online courses group	18	16%
Online advertisement group	23	20%
Did not receive	40	35%
Others	8	7.20%
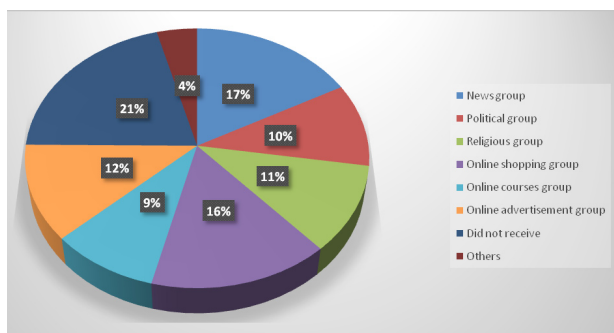
Fig 12: Level of Influencer

Respondents have been asked if they ever felt influenced and started following that group, then which type of page it is and the responses has been analyzed as follows:

29% claimed it to be a news group, 26% were influenced by an online shopping group, 20% were influenced by Online advertisement groups, 18% were influenced by religious groups, 17% were influenced by Political group, 16% people were influenced by Online classes groups whereas 35% people have not received any such invitations.

Findings and Conclusion

This research work contributes to the understanding of Manipulative marketing. Manipulative marketing is used in various business activities and it has numerous applications in the field of marketing.

It was found that the people are using social media platforms on a regular basis regardless of age, gender or educational qualification according to their own preferences. Social Media has been able to reach out to everyone and people are using it on a daily basis. Younger people tend to use it more as interactive platforms whereas the elderly people have been using the social media platforms for the purpose of awareness of what's happening in the world.

This study revealed that people are using different social media platforms which have diverse impacts on their lives. On an average, the respondents are using social media platforms around 2-5 hours a day and during that period they come across a lot of content in the form of news, memes, shared messages, videos and according to the preference people like and share some content as well.

The respondents revealed that when they like some post on social media, similar type of content is displayed in front of them through their social media platforms again and again. Therefore, similar content comes across them because of the social networks due to which users of social media start getting affected by this content and after sometime they get influenced by this forwarded content and also end up liking their page and follow them which in turn is a tactic to increase their following and feeds. In this manner such pages even tend to transform the views of the users through their content and change the user's perception.

The study also reveals a fact that although respondents are users of various types of Apps and social media sites, there are 2 major types of Apps which are maximum used by them. These Apps are as below:

1. News Apps like, Wire, Google News, TOI etc

2. Online shopping Apps, like Amazon, Fab India, Myntra etc.

These two are the most successful Apps in influencing their users through their manipulative approach by offering a badge or any certificate of recognition.

Hence, the conclusion derived is that every action on social media platform is recorded through some technology and then people tend to come across similar kind of content on a daily basis and even get influenced which overpowers their decision-making ability and the pages or content creators achieve what they want.

89% of marketing is done through social media platforms which have the power to influence and change the view point of the end users which in turn helps the pages and businesses to grow much faster. So, the conclusion comes that Social Media does hold a strong power to overpower and manipulate users' views and decision-making.

This study has few limitations as well, like a sample size was smaller and was restricted only to young respondents and of Delhi & NCR only.

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- (https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/321611 Scott Old ford)

- Robert E. Goodin, Manipulatory Politics 19 (1980)

- Yeung, supra note 6, at 121; see also Lanzing, supra note 7.

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Annexure 14.6

Submission Date	Submission Id	Word Count	Character Count
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Analyzed Document	Submitter email	Submitted by	Similarity
1.1 ERP1_Vinita_GJEIS Apr to Jun 2022.docx (D155456601)	vinitasharma75@gmail.com	Vinita Sharma	10%

Reviewers Memorandum

Reviewer's Comment 1: The choice of topic is appropriate for the study. The theme for the study is quite comprehensive, which strengthens the novelty of the work accomplished. But it lacks a comprehensive support of literature. The authors could further add more updated and recent literature to make the study stronger.

Reviewer's Comment 2: Social media platforms have the power to influence and change the viewpoint of the end users. The study discusses how the customers or the viewers get manipulated by the techniques and the mechanisms of social media technology.

Reviewer's Comment 3: The study is quantitative in nature based on the analysis of primary data from 132 respondents, analysed using MS Excel. Advanced statistical software and tools could be applied to advance the quality of the work done.

Editorial Excerpt

The article has 10% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the GJEIS for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Vinita and Tanu), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "**The Impact of Social Media Technology on Manipulative Marketing Potential**" both subject-wise and research-wise. Marketing manipulation deals with the tactics and strategies used by marketers that prey on human cognitive, social and memory-based biases ultimately influencing their views and hence behaviour in their favour. The study by using a quantitative approach gives a deep understanding of changing ways of manipulative marketing in the presence of social media to assess the tendency of viewers to get influenced. Overall, the paper promises to provide a strong base for further studies in the area. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under "**Empirical Research Paper**" category.