



A Dataset on “Social Media and India’s Foreign Policy: The Case Study of X Diplomacy During the Covid-19 Pandemic”

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DATA PAPER

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ABSTRACT

This dataset analyzes “Social Media and India’s Foreign Policy: The Case Study of X Diplomacy during the Covid-19 Pandemic”. Collected via a web-based questionnaire targeting individuals aged 18–61 + in India, the dataset comprises 171 valid responses stored on Mendeley. It explores the significance of social media in India’s foreign policy, the influence of platforms like X in policymaking, and their effectiveness during the pandemic. Additionally, it examines how the Indian government leveraged X to communicate messages and shape narratives in international politics. This dataset offers valuable insights into social media’s impact on global diplomacy and crisis communication.

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KEYWORDS:

Social Media; Foreign Policy; Public Diplomacy; X Platform; Covid-19 Pandemic; Digital Diplomacy

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(1) OVERVIEW

REPOSITORY LOCATION

<https://data.mendeley.com/datasets/xfr9y9ggkm/3>.

CONTEXT

This data was produced as a part of a research paper titled “Social Media and India’s Foreign Policy: The Case Study of X Diplomacy during the Covid-19 Pandemic”. Throughout history, intelligence acquisition, decoding, analysis, and dissemination have shaped foreign policy, negotiation strategies, and diplomatic norms. Traditionally, information was collected through telegrams, radio, TV, fax, and, in modern times, digital platforms like social media. Among various social media, X (formerly Twitter) has become a key tool for digital diplomacy (Ong’ong’a, 2023) and, more so in foreign policy, revolutionizing interactions between nations and leaders as a powerful tool for world leaders to rapidly communicate (Rufai & Bunce, 2020). Thus, diplomacy, as a tool of foreign policy, is transforming by this revolution (Adesina, 2017).

Since its introduction by Burson-Marsteller in 2011, the term “Twiplomacy” has gained significance in global affairs. A subsequent study, also by Burson-Marsteller, in 2013 analyzed 505 government accounts across 153 countries, revealing that approximately 78% of world leaders maintain a presence on Twitter. Furthermore, 68% of these leaders engage in bilateral relationships with counterparts from other nations through the platform, and 45 governments actively utilize Twitter as a communication channel (Kuźniar & Filimoniuk, 2017). Thus, Twitter has become a crucial platform for international diplomacy and has played a significant role in diplomacy in the past few years (Chhabra, 2020), enabling real-time interactions beyond traditional channels. Twitter’s immediacy allows direct, swift communication between states, enhancing diplomatic practices and facilitating impactful exchanges on global issues.

India’s foray into digital diplomacy began in July 2010 with the launch of the @IndianDiplomacy Twitter account, followed by the establishment of the official @MEAIndia account in 2011 (Akbaruddin, 2021; MEA, n.d.). Since then, India’s digital diplomacy efforts, particularly on Twitter, have burgeoned, serving as a vital platform for disseminating information regarding bilateral and multilateral engagements, high-level visits, and meetings involving heads of state and senior foreign service officials. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has expanded this digital footprint by successfully bringing 174 of India’s Foreign Missions and Posts onto Twitter (MEA, n.d.).

The study aimed to assess the extent of India’s engagement in X diplomacy during the Covid-19 pandemic, to examine the influence of X diplomacy on India’s foreign policy decisions, to analyze the effectiveness of India’s X diplomacy in shaping diplomatic strategies, and to identify the opportunities X diplomacy presents in India’s foreign policy. I explore the challenges and limitations of employing X diplomacy in India’s foreign policy, examining the objectives of X diplomacy in advancing public diplomacy, soft power, crisis management, bilateral and multilateral engagement, and nation branding, which shape India’s foreign policy. The rationale for this research lies in its examination of how X diplomacy contributes to various aspects of international relations, including public diplomacy, soft power, crisis management, bilateral and multilateral interactions, and nation branding. Through an analysis of these objectives, the study offers valuable perspectives on the significance of X diplomacy in moulding India’s foreign policy during worldwide crises and boosting its global standing.

(2) METHOD

The methodology and experimental design employed in this study examined the importance of social media, like X, in India’s foreign policy and during the Covid-19 pandemic. The structured questionnaire, diverse participant selection, and rigorous data screening processes ensured the reliability and validity of the collected data. The dataset was generated in the following steps.

SOFTWARE AND INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire was carefully revised following guidelines from the Ethical Committee and received approval from the Institutional Human Ethics Committee (IHEC) at Goa University for

research involving human participants. After thorough review and modifications, a final version was produced with 44 questions in diverse formats, such as single-choice, multiple-choice, open-ended, and quiz-type questions (refer to survey instrument – questionnaire material with the dataset on Mendeley). The questionnaire addressed demographic information, social media consumption behavior, content, and usage preferences. It was distributed via Google Forms, a widely used online research platform. Before distribution, the questionnaire underwent a small-scale pretest with 20 respondents, allowing for adjustments to the questions and survey length. This process ensured clarity and accuracy in the final questionnaire.

SAMPLING STRATEGY

To ensure data that is both comprehensive and diverse, this study employed a simple random sampling strategy. In this method, a sample of n units is randomly selected from a total population of N units, giving each potential sample an equal chance of being chosen (Wang, 2001).

I aimed for survey respondents to comprehensively represent all age groups population in India. The main requirements for sampling were:

1. Respondents must be residents of India.
2. Respondents were divided between the age categories of 18–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–60, and 61 and above. This ensured holistic perspectives and representation across age groups in India.

COLLECTION PROCESS

The questionnaire was made accessible to all the participants through Google Forms from India from 18 to 61 and above through email and WhatsApp platforms.

DATA SCREENING

After releasing the questionnaire, 171 responses were collected. To ensure data quality and eliminate incomplete or irregular responses, all essential questions were made mandatory in the Google Form, ensuring that responses could only be submitted if all required questions were answered. As a result, all 171 responses were complete and retained for analysis. Table 1 shows the respondent's basic demographic information.

The table provides a comprehensive overview of the respondents' basic demographic information, capturing critical variables such as gender, age, education, and profession. This data is essential for understanding the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of participants, ensuring the research findings are contextualized and representative of varied social, professional, and educational segments.

CHARACTERISTICS	PERCENTAGE
Gender	
Male	59.6
Female	40.4
Age	
18–30	55.0
31–40	26.9
41–50	11.1
51–60	5.8
61 and above	1.2
Education	
Graduate	26.3
Postgraduate	56.1

Table 1 Respondents' demographic information.

(Contd.)

CHARACTERISTICS	PERCENTAGE
M.Phil.	4.7
Ph.D.	12.3
Postdoc	0
Diploma	0.6
Professions	
Teacher and Professor	36.8
Student	29.8
NGOs	0.6
Freelancer, Researcher, and Analyst	1.8
Lawyer	2.3
Sales	0.6
Blogger	1.2
Private Service	8.2
Government Service	4.7
Research Scholar	3.5
Unemployed	2.9
Home Maker	2.3
Consultant	0.6
Hotelier	0.6
Journalist	1.8
Doctor	2.3

QUALITY CONTROL

This data was collected through Google Forms, and quality control was performed using Google's quality control features, including viewing respondent feedback. Since it was mandatory for quality checks, all essential questions were made compulsory in the Google form, and thus, it was ensured that incomplete forms and data were eliminated. As a result, all 171 responses were valid.

(3) DATASET DESCRIPTION

REPOSITORY NAME

Mendeley Data

OBJECT NAME

Social Media and India's Foreign Policy: The Case Study of X Diplomacy during the Covid-19 Pandemic

FORMAT NAMES AND VERSIONS

Raw data (XLSX – Excel) and Survey instrument – Questionnaire (.pdf file).

CREATION DATES

2024-04-01–2024-05-31

DATASET CREATORS

Mukund V. Narvenkar (Ph.D.), responsible for conceptualization, research design, data extraction and validation, and dataset creation, is a faculty member of the School of International and Area Studies, Goa University, India.

LANGUAGE

All variable names are in English.

LICENSE

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PUBLICATION DATE

2024-12-19

(4) REUSE POTENTIAL

With a sample size of 171 participants, multiple variables, and a statistically representative survey, this dataset provides a strong basis for further statistical analysis.

1. These datasets can be further analyzed using data-mining approaches to reveal participants' grouping based on the demographic variables. For instance, state- and age-group-specific behavior and attitude towards the significance of the X platform in setting the narrative in India's foreign policy (for the variables, see Excel raw database included with the dataset on Mendeley).
2. The dataset includes variables on respondents' attitudes and foundational behaviors toward social media and India's foreign policy. This section provides insights into their sources of information on India's foreign policy and social media usage.
3. Researchers can utilize the dataset for various statistical analyses to conduct quantitative analyses, such as correlations and regression analyses, to uncover the role of X in shaping Indian foreign policy and how X influences policy decisions, projects soft power, and advances cultural diplomacy initiatives globally.
4. Researchers can utilize the dataset in the opportunities and challenges section to provide insights into the accuracy, credibility, and authenticity of diplomatic communications.
5. Researchers can utilize the dataset on India's X diplomacy in response to Covid-19, which offers valuable insights into demographic behavior and highlights the pivotal role of social media platforms in effectively communicating its response to the international community.

(5) LIMITATION

The limitations of this research data include its reliance on case study analysis, which may restrict generalizability to other contexts outside of the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, the focus on X diplomacy means findings may not fully apply to other social media platforms with different user dynamics and engagement patterns. The sample size and scope are also limited, possibly affecting the depth of insights into broader public perceptions and diplomatic practices. While the dataset is limited to 171 respondents, it adequately captures the variables necessary for answering various research questions. Despite its small size, the dataset reflects key trends and patterns relevant to the topic. Further, the dataset offers rare insights into respondents' perspectives on utilizing the X platform in India's foreign policy, which compensates for its scope limitations.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project Administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review & Editing.

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