

Silver Voices Online: Elderly Social Media Engagement and the Reimagining of Aging in India

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Abstract

In India, where traditional narratives of aging emphasize withdrawal from public life and reliance on familial care, the emergence of elderly individuals on digital platforms presents a striking cultural shift. This paper explores how older adults in India are increasingly engaging with social media platform Instagram to negotiate visibility, identity, and intergenerational relationships. Through qualitative analysis and case-based observations of elderly social media users, the study demonstrates how these platforms are employed to share knowledge, sustain cultural practices, seek companionship, and build communities beyond geographic limitations. While digital participation empowers elderly individuals to challenge ageist stereotypes and assert new roles as storytellers, influencers, and mentors, it simultaneously exposes them to risks of online exclusion, misinformation, and generational divides in media literacy. By situating the Indian elderly within broader debates on digital inclusion and cultural change, the paper argues that social media is reshaping both the lived experiences of aging and the societal perceptions of later life. The findings contribute to scholarship on media and aging in the Global South, highlighting how Indian elderly users of social media navigate the tensions between empowerment and vulnerability in an increasingly digitized society.

Keywords: Elderly, Social Media, Aging in India, Digital Inclusion, Ageism

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of social media platforms such as Instagram has significantly reshaped cultural expression and identity construction in contemporary India. While digital spaces are often associated with youth culture, self-promotion, and consumer-driven influencer economies, older adults are increasingly carving out their own digital niches. This presence challenges the long-standing association of the internet with younger generations and opens up new possibilities for rethinking aging, creativity, and intergenerational relationships in online environments.

Traditionally, elderly individuals in India have been depicted through narrow cultural lenses—often as dependents, custodians of tradition, or figures associated with decline and withdrawal from public life. Mainstream media representations rarely capture them as active agents of creativity, desire, or influence.

In contrast, social media platforms provide an opportunity for the elderly to showcase their individuality, subvert stereotypes, and connect with both younger and older audiences. By producing entertaining, educational, and aesthetically rich content, elderly influencers present themselves as visible and relatable figures in the digital public sphere.

A growing number of elderly influencers on Instagram exemplify this shift. Their content ranges widely from humor and family collaborations to discussions on intimacy, sexuality, fashion, art, and lifestyle. Some use Instagram to celebrate intergenerational bonding through playful family videos, while others focus on breaking cultural taboos surrounding aging, beauty, and sex. Their popularity is evident in substantial followings, viral reels, and even brand collaborations that expand their reach beyond traditional social boundaries. The visibility of these influencers suggests that digital culture is not only accommodating older adults but is also actively shaped by them.

Despite this emerging phenomenon, scholarship on elderly social media influencers in India remains limited. Existing research on digital culture largely centers on younger users, influencer economies, and youth-driven trends, while studies on aging often highlight issues of isolation, marginalization, or technological exclusion. Few works examine how older individuals actively participate in and transform the digital influencer landscape. Addressing this gap is crucial for understanding how social media can serve as a site of empowerment, visibility, and cultural negotiation for elderly populations.

This paper explores the digital presence of five elderly Indian influencers on Instagram. Through case study analysis, it examines how they challenge stereotypes of aging, create intergenerational dialogue, and expand the possibilities of representation in digital culture. By situating their practices within broader debates on aging, media, and identity, the paper highlights the socio-cultural significance of elderly influencers and their role in reshaping narratives of both old age and online influence in contemporary India.

2. Literature Review

The participation of elderly individuals in digital spaces is increasingly recognized as vital to active aging and enhancing well-being globally. Studies indicate that digital inclusion initiatives can help mitigate the digital divide among older populations, highlighting the efforts by governments to support this demographic. For instance, Li and Kostka emphasize initiatives in China aimed at improving digital literacy among older adults, though awareness of such policies remains low among the targeted demographic (Li & Kostka, 2024). Furthermore, technology-assisted interventions, such as telehealth and smart devices, have been shown to significantly improve the quality of life for the elderly by addressing their physical and emotional needs (Albarqi, 2024; Riboni et al., 2020). The use of social media by older adults can serve as an empowering tool to challenge stereotypes and reshape societal narratives around aging (Friemel, 2014). However, in India, barriers such as low digital literacy, an urban-rural divide, and cultural challenges hinder participation in digital spaces, as indicated by findings from Nandru et al. (Nandru et al., 2021). Addressing these disparities is crucial for fostering inclusive environments that support the cognitive and social needs of the elderly population, promoting their engagement in the digital world (Liu, 2022).

Traditional media often portrays the elderly as frail, dependent, and conservative, reinforcing stereotypes that negatively influence public perception of aging (Kovács et al., 2020; Fealy et al., 2011). Advances in digital media, however, empower older adults to reclaim agency and reshape their narratives. Social media platforms like Instagram provide opportunities for identity-building and the establishment of intergenerational relationships, enabling older individuals to confront societal stereotypes (Ferrari, 2016). For example, older adults are increasingly utilizing these platforms to challenge societal expectations and engage in discussions about topics that have traditionally been considered taboo, including sexuality and fashion (Ruan et al., 2023). In the Indian context, cultural norms related to family hierarchies and respect for elders complicate representations of aging. Elders are often expected to adhere to conservative values, which can stifle open discussions on contemporary issues like intimacy or personal expression (Lindblom & Torres, 2021). Consequently, while digital platforms present opportunities for empowerment, they also interact with culturally ingrained perspectives that may inhibit full expression and acceptance of diverse aging experiences (Jiang & Tang, 2023). Overall, as older adults navigate digital spaces, they actively contribute to redefining their societal roles and identities.

The rise of influencer culture in India is redefining societal norms, particularly regarding aging. Older adults are emerging as micro-celebrities, challenging conventional views of beauty, fashion, and intimacy through platforms like Instagram. This shift is significant as it allows elderly influencers to renegotiate family roles and portray a more dynamic self-image Pandey (2023), King et al., 2024). Their engagement not only highlights changing perceptions of aging but also fosters intergenerational relationships, shedding light on the evolving dynamics of social positioning in digital spaces (Niu et al., 2021).

Additionally, the commercialization of influencer culture reveals intriguing patterns as brands increasingly seek collaborations with older influencers. These partnerships not only attract a diverse audience demographic but also emphasize the economic potential of captivating attention through age-inclusive marketing strategies (Kamath & Dsouza, 2025). However, there exists a notable gap in academic discourse surrounding elderly influencers, especially in the Indian context. Most existing studies predominantly focus on youth, thereby overlooking the significant impact and presence of older adults in the influencer landscape (Plasencia, 2021; Freytag & Shore, 2025). Addressing these gaps in research is crucial, as understanding the role of elderly influencers can further illuminate their impact on societal attitudes towards aging.

The exploration of elderly social media influencers in India presents a significant gap in existing scholarship, which predominantly focuses on youth, cyber violence, and digital entrepreneurship. While there's considerable research on the experiences of younger users and digital marketing strategies targeting them, the experiences of older adults as change agents remain under-explored. This study aims to fill this gap by foregrounding the experiences and cultural negotiations of elderly influencers within the Indian digital ecosystem.

2.1 Research Gaps

Existing literature highlights how digital technologies can enhance social interactions among older individuals, but it often overlooks the unique contributions of elderly influencers who actively redefine

societal norms related to beauty, intimacy, and family roles through their public personas. Additionally, the commercialization of these influencers through brand collaborations offers insights into their economic impacts, a facet that is often overshadowed by youth-centric analyses in marketing research. Resultantly, this research not only addresses the specific niche of elderly influencers but also enriches the broader understanding of digital dynamics in Indian society.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore how elderly Indians engage with digital media and shape narratives of aging through social platforms. The analysis focuses exclusively on Instagram, a platform that has emerged as a powerful space for visual storytelling, influencer culture, and intergenerational interaction.

3.1 Selection of Cases

Five elderly influencers were purposively selected to represent diverse dimensions of online participation. Each case reflects a unique combination of creativity, cultural expression, and public reception: from artistic self-expression to intergenerational collaboration, lifestyle and fashion content, educational discourse on intimacy, and the cultivation of “internet grandparent” identities. The criteria for selection included:

1. Age above 60 years.
2. Active presence on Instagram with consistent content production.
3. A substantial follower base, demonstrating significant audience engagement.
4. Thematic diversity in content, ensuring that the sample covered artistic, cultural, relational, lifestyle, and educational perspectives.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were gathered from publicly available Instagram accounts of the five influencers. This included examining profile descriptions, posts, reels, captions, follower interactions, and media coverage related to the influencers. Particular attention was paid to the frequency of posting, types of content (educational, artistic, humorous, lifestyle), and patterns of engagement (likes, comments, shares, brand collaborations). Supplementary secondary sources, such as online articles and interviews, were used to contextualize the influencers’ public personas.

3.3 Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis. Each case was examined to identify recurring themes, such as representation of aging, negotiation of stereotypes, intergenerational dynamics, and the commercialization of digital influence. A comparative lens was applied across the five cases to highlight similarities and contrasts in how elderly influencers construct digital identities. The analysis was interpretive, aimed at understanding not only what content was produced but also the cultural meanings it generated within the Indian context.

3.4 Limitations

The study is limited to Instagram as the sole platform of analysis, which may not capture elderly participation across other digital media. Additionally, since the research relied on publicly available data, it does not include private perspectives of the influencers or their audiences. Despite these constraints, the chosen cases provide valuable insights into the emerging phenomenon of elderly influence in Indian digital culture.

4. Findings and Qualitative Analysis

4.1 Case Study 1: Redefining Aging through Instagram

Dinesh Mohan, a 66-year-old fashion model and Instagram personality with nearly half a million followers, exemplifies the transformative potential of social media for elderly individuals in India. Once weighing over 100 kilograms and struggling with limited mobility, Mohan made a deliberate choice to lose weight and reinvent his life. His entry into modelling, initially perceived as unconventional for someone his age, marked the beginning of an extraordinary journey. Despite competing alongside younger men in his first audition, he recalls relishing the experience and being encouraged by photographers who affirmed that he “belonged” in the industry. His success snowballed as he signed with a modelling agency, secured film auditions, and eventually acted alongside Bollywood icons such as Salman Khan and Rajnikant. For his family, his transformation was startling: from struggling to walk, he was now walking ramps at prestigious fashion shows. Social media played a crucial role in amplifying this journey. Through Instagram, Mohan cultivated a vibrant online persona that inspired both younger and older generations. His comment sections are replete with admiration, where followers frequently describe him as “hot,” “sexy,” and “handsome,” often accompanied by fire emojis symbolizing vitality and attractiveness. Notably, his followers also frame him as an “inspiration,” acknowledging not only his physical transformation but also his resilience in redefining what aging can look like in contemporary India.

4.1.1 Qualitative Analysis

The case of Dinesh Mohan illustrates how elderly individuals in India are leveraging social media platforms to reconstruct their identities beyond societal expectations of decline, withdrawal, and invisibility. His journey foregrounds several critical themes:

1. **Reinvention and Agency:** Mohan’s decision to lose weight and pursue modelling challenges dominant narratives of aging as a passive process. Instead, he demonstrates active agency in reshaping his lifestyle and public identity.
2. **Visibility and Representation:** By entering the fashion industry and film, Mohan disrupts ageist assumptions that equate desirability, glamour, and ambition with youth. His online presence amplifies this disruption, offering alternative representations of elderly masculinity.
3. **Intergenerational Resonance:** The responses he receives on Instagram—from admiration for his appearance to recognition of his inspirational value—indicate cross-generational engagement. Younger followers view him as aspirational, while older individuals may find validation in his ability to defy stereotypes of aging.

4. **Digital Empowerment:** Social media platforms act as equalizers, enabling elderly individuals like Mohan to bypass traditional gatekeeping mechanisms in industries such as fashion and film. His rise to visibility was not solely dependent on institutional recognition but was accelerated by the participatory and viral nature of Instagram.
5. **Cultural Negotiation of Aging in India:** In a society where aging is often associated with withdrawal into familial or spiritual life, Mohan's public persona as a glamorous, active, and self-expressive elderly man represents a cultural shift. His narrative illustrates how Indian elderly individuals can engage in digital self-fashioning that both resists and redefines cultural norms.

This case study underscores the role of social media in not only transforming personal trajectories but also contributing to broader cultural conversations around aging in India. Dinesh Mohan's Instagram presence demonstrates that elderly individuals can actively participate in, and even reshape, the cultural aesthetics of desirability, vitality, and success.

4.2 Case Study 2: The “Dancing Dadi” and Performing Joy Online

Ravi Bala Sharma, popularly known as the “dancing dadi”, represents another dimension of elderly social media participation in India. At the age of 67, Sharma has carved out a vibrant space on Instagram, where her reels feature her dancing with grace, energy, and infectious enthusiasm. Her journey into digital visibility is deeply rooted in personal loss. Encouraged by her late husband to revive her passion for dance, Sharma faced a turning point when he passed away in 2016, leaving her grieving and unfulfilled. Rather than allowing her trauma to define her later years, she chose to channel her sorrow into performance, transforming her private grief into a public celebration of art and resilience.

Her Instagram journey began in 2020, when her son uploaded a video of her dancing. The response was overwhelmingly positive, propelling her into the spotlight and eventually amassing a following of over 717,000 people. Her content resonates widely, with some of her reels garnering up to 50 million views and tens of thousands of comments. Followers frequently praise her talent, beauty, and charisma, often using clapping and heart emojis, and affirmations of admiration. Many comments emphasize her ability to inspire joy and embody vitality, while others frame her as proof that “age is just a number.” Through her graceful movements, Sharma demonstrates that elderly bodies, often associated with frailty or inactivity, can be sites of creativity, passion, and cultural expression.

4.2.1 Qualitative Analysis

The case of Ravi Bala Sharma highlights the ways in which social media enables elderly women in India to reclaim visibility and agency through performance. Several key themes emerge:

1. **Resilience and Healing through Performance:** Sharma's dance practice is not merely entertainment but also a means of coping with grief and trauma. By transforming personal pain into creative expression, she models resilience and emotional strength, offering her followers a narrative of hope.
2. **Gendered Dimensions of Aging:** Unlike Dinesh Mohan's embodiment of glamour and desirability, Sharma redefines elderly femininity through artistry, cultural rootedness, and

emotional authenticity. Her identity as a grandmother (dadi) further enhances her appeal, combining familial respect with modern visibility.

3. **Intergenerational Mediation:** The role of her son in initiating her Instagram presence underscores the significance of intergenerational support in elderly digital engagement. This collaboration highlights how families can become enablers of elderly visibility in online spaces.
4. **Community and Validation:** The volume of comments on her reels reflects the participatory culture of social media, where audiences actively validate and amplify her performances. The admiration she receives challenges dominant narratives of invisibility for elderly women, instead positioning her as a cultural icon of vitality.
5. **Reframing Aging as Celebration:** Sharma's success embodies a counter-narrative to the cultural expectation of withdrawal in later life. Her visibility on Instagram reflects a cultural negotiation where aging is reframed not as decline but as a space for creativity, recognition, and public joy.

Through her online presence, Ravi Bala Sharma redefines what it means to age as a woman in India. Her digital performances highlight how social media can function as both a stage for personal healing and a platform for cultural reinvention. She illustrates that elderly women are not passive bearers of tradition but active participants in shaping digital cultures, inspiring multigenerational audiences, and challenging ageist and gendered stereotypes of invisibility.

4.3 Case Study 3: The “Sassy Saasu” and Intergenerational Creativity

Manjiri Varde, widely recognized on Instagram as the “sassy saasu”, offers a vibrant example of how elderly women in India use social media to disrupt stereotypes of aging and familial roles. At 66, Varde has cultivated a digital persona that is simultaneously playful, artistic, and intergenerational. An established artist and designer, she runs her label Samanjri, which produces wearable art, calligraphy, and poetic designs. Yet it is her Instagram collaborations with her celebrity daughter-in-law, actor Sameera Reddy, that have cemented her as a household name among younger and older audiences alike. Their short, humorous videos explore and subvert cultural stereotypes of the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship, a theme deeply embedded in Indian family narratives.

With over 180,000 followers, Varde has carved a unique niche by blending artistry, humor, and lifestyle content. Her style—marked by colorful sarees, scarves she designs herself, and a youthful flair sets her apart from traditional representations of Indian elderly women. Her reels on cooking, art, and lighthearted family moments resonate widely, as evidenced by the diversity of her followers. She is admired not only for her talent and fashion but also for her ability to embody a “hip” and non-conventional version of aging. Her followers often comment on her relatability, her sense of humor, and the refreshing ways she reimagines familial bonds.

4.3.1 Qualitative Analysis

The case of Manjiri Varde highlights how elderly individuals, especially women, can leverage social media to redefine familial roles and cultural expectations in India. Several themes emerge:

1. **Challenging Familial Stereotypes:** Varde's collaborations with her daughter-in-law disrupt traditional narratives of tension or hierarchy in Indian families. Instead, they present an image of intergenerational bonding that is collaborative, humorous, and affectionate, offering a progressive model of family life.
2. **Creative Visibility:** Beyond her family-oriented videos, Varde's identity as an artist foregrounds the role of creativity in redefining aging. Her wearable art and calligraphy projects position her as both a cultural contributor and an entrepreneur, showcasing how elderly women can remain professionally and creatively active.
3. **Fashioning a Non-traditional Elderly Identity:** By dressing in youthful, stylish attire and maintaining a dynamic digital presence, Varde challenges cultural expectations of how elderly women should present themselves. Her followers admire her refusal to conform to conservative aesthetics, viewing her as a model of modern, expressive aging.
4. **Intergenerational Appeal:** Her audience includes both younger and older generations, reflecting how her digital persona bridges generational divides. Younger followers see her as a relatable and entertaining figure, while older followers may be inspired by her reinvention and creativity.
5. **Cultural Negotiation of Aging:** Varde's online presence illustrates how elderly women in India are increasingly using social media to navigate cultural scripts of family, femininity, and aging. By performing humor, art, and modernity, she resists invisibility and instead creates a space of vibrant visibility.

Through her Instagram presence, Manjiri Varde exemplifies how elderly women can use digital platforms not only for self-expression but also to influence cultural discourses on family, fashion, and aging. Her role as the “sassy saasu” underscores the transformative potential of social media in reshaping traditional identities, positioning elderly women as active participants in contemporary cultural production.

4.4 Case Study 4: The “Internet Grandparents” and Digital Companionship

At the ages of 82 and 76, Mr and Mrs Verma represent a growing cohort of elderly Indians who are transforming social media into a site of joy, relatability, and intergenerational bonding. Known affectionately as the “internet grandparents,” the couple have amassed over 60,000 Instagram followers, creating reels that showcase their humor, fashion, and affectionate partnership. Their popularity extends across generational lines: young audiences admire their playfulness and sense of style, while older followers resonate with their warmth and companionship. Their most popular video garnered over 2 million views, underscoring their broad appeal and ability to engage audiences far beyond their immediate social circle.

The Vermas have also become sought-after figures in influencer marketing. With brand deals ranging from healing balms to household detergents, their digital presence blends entertainment with consumerism. Yet what distinguishes them is not only their commercial visibility but the cultural role they occupy. They function as “digital grandparents,” offering a symbolic form of companionship to younger generations navigating fragmented and fast-paced urban lives. Their content embodies a mixture of modern trends and traditional intimacy, creating a digital persona that feels both fresh and familiar.

4.4.1 Qualitative Analysis

The case of Mr and Mrs Verma illustrates how elderly couples can use social media to reframe narratives of aging, companionship, and relevance. Several themes emerge:

1. **Couplehood and Visibility:** Unlike individual elderly influencers, the Vermas highlight the significance of companionship in later life. Their presence together models aging as a shared, joyful experience rather than one of isolation or decline.
2. **Intergenerational Relatability:** By participating in trendy reels and adopting youthful fashion, they appeal to younger followers who view them as endearing and “cool.” At the same time, their age and authenticity allow older viewers to see themselves reflected in digital spaces.
3. **Commercial Viability:** Their brand endorsements suggest that elderly influencers are increasingly valuable in consumer markets. By promoting products such as healing balms and detergents, they align their digital persona with everyday domestic life, expanding their relatability.
4. **Disrupting Ageist Assumptions:** Their active participation in social media challenges stereotypes that elderly people are technologically incapable or culturally irrelevant. Instead, they embody a modern form of elderhood that is stylish, humorous, and deeply social.
5. **Cultural Symbolism of “Digital Grandparents”:** Their popularity is partly rooted in the symbolic comfort they provide. In a society where urban migration and nuclear families often separate younger generations from grandparents, the Vermas fill a cultural gap by embodying affection, playfulness, and familial continuity online.

Through their Instagram presence, Mr and Mrs Verma redefine aging as a period of shared vitality, creativity, and public relevance. Their identity as “internet grandparents” reflects not only their personal joy but also a broader cultural negotiation in India, where elderly figures are increasingly visible as both entertainers and cultural anchors in the digital age.

4.5 Case Study 5: Redefining Intimacy and Aging in the Digital Public Sphere

Seema Anand, a mythologist in her 60s, has carved out a distinct digital identity by addressing one of the most deeply entrenched taboos in Indian society—sex and intimacy. Through her Instagram platform, Anand educates her audience on topics ranging from virginity, pleasure, and sexual myths to the possibilities of maintaining a fulfilling sex life in older age. Her reels are interactive and approachable, enabling conversations that are often silenced in the private domain to be reimagined in the digital public sphere. By embracing her grey hair and unapologetically addressing sexuality, Anand disrupts two simultaneous cultural silences: that elderly women should be invisible in discussions of desire, and that sex itself is a forbidden subject in Indian cultural discourse.

Her digital impact is substantial. With reels that often go viral, one video receiving over 19 million views, Anand attracts a mixed audience of both younger and older followers. Many engage with her content to unlearn myths around sex, while others admire her for breaking generational and cultural stereotypes. Her confidence and openness position her not just as a mythologist but as a cultural educator who uses ancient stories and contemporary language to normalize discussions on sexuality. In doing so, she challenges

stigmas surrounding intimacy, gender, and aging, carving out a rare space where sex and elderhood are discussed without shame.

4.5.1 Qualitative Analysis

The case of Seema Anand illustrates the transformative potential of social media for elderly women in India who engage with subjects considered taboo. Several themes emerge from her digital presence:

1. **Taboo-Breaking Discourse:** By addressing sex, virginity, and pleasure, Anand dismantles silence around sexuality, especially for older women. Her work destabilizes the cultural norm that equates aging with desexualization.
2. **Reclaiming Elderly Femininity:** Anand's embrace of her grey hair alongside her frank discussions on intimacy reframes elderly femininity as confident, visible, and unapologetically authentic. She resists cultural pressures to conceal age or retreat from public conversations on desire.
3. **Intergenerational Learning:** Anand's audience cuts across age groups. Younger followers gain education about sexuality, while older followers are encouraged to challenge internalized shame and recognize their right to intimacy. This dual audience positions her as a bridge between generations.
4. **Digital Pedagogy:** Her use of reels as an educational medium demonstrates how social media can serve as a tool for public pedagogy. She integrates mythological storytelling with modern discourses on intimacy, making difficult conversations accessible and engaging.
5. **Cultural Resistance and Empowerment:** Anand's presence represents a radical act of cultural resistance within Indian society, where discussions of sex are heavily policed by morality and modesty. Her visibility and popularity illustrate how digital platforms can empower elderly women to challenge social boundaries and normalize progressive conversations.

Through her Instagram presence, Seema Anand exemplifies how elderly women can use digital platforms not only to express themselves but also to reshape cultural conversations around taboo subjects. Her bold engagement with sexuality and aging signals a broader cultural shift in India, where digital spaces provide new opportunities for challenging silences, empowering women, and reframing the intersections of intimacy, age, and identity.

5. Comparative Thematic Analysis of Elderly Social Media Engagement in India

The five case studies—Dinesh Mohan, Ravi Bala Sharma, Manjiri Varde, Mr and Mrs Verma, and Seema Anand—illustrate the diverse ways elderly Indians are leveraging social media to challenge stereotypes, assert visibility, and participate actively in cultural discourses. While each individual or couple embodies unique trajectories, their digital practices converge on a common theme: the reimagining of aging in India's digital age. The analysis identifies five interconnected thematic strands.

5.1. Reinvention and Self-Transformation

Dinesh Mohan's journey from obesity and limited mobility to becoming a celebrated fashion model epitomizes the theme of self-reinvention. His case highlights how elderly individuals can use digital platforms to construct alternative narratives of aging that center vitality, glamour, and desirability. Reinvention, in his story, is not only personal but also symbolic—an assertion that elderly bodies can be sites of confidence, attraction, and cultural relevance.

5.2. Performance and Healing

In contrast, Ravi Bala Sharma, the “dancing dadi,” exemplifies how performance becomes a form of healing and resilience. By transforming personal grief into artistic expression, she engages audiences through dance while embodying joy, energy, and inspiration. Her digital persona demonstrates that social media can function as a therapeutic and empowering space for elderly individuals, particularly women, to process trauma while simultaneously captivating intergenerational audiences.

5.3. Intergenerational Collaboration and Bonding

Manjiri Varde, the “sassy saasu,” represents the power of intergenerational collaboration in digital spaces. By co-creating humorous and relatable content with her daughter-in-law Sameera Reddy, she challenges entrenched stereotypes of strained mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships. Her artistic identity and non-traditional fashion sense further highlight how elderly women can reinvent themselves as cultural icons of creativity, humor, and style. This case underscores how familial support and collaboration can facilitate elderly digital visibility.

5.4. Companionship and Relatability

The joint presence of Mr and Mrs Verma, the “internet grandparents,” highlights the theme of companionship in later life. Unlike individual influencers, their shared persona emphasizes love, humor, and partnership as central elements of aging. Their relatability across age groups—combined with their increasing role in brand endorsements—demonstrates how elderly couples can leverage social media to embody warmth and authenticity while also contributing to consumer culture. They symbolize the comfort of grandparental affection, filling a cultural void in urbanized contexts where younger generations often live away from extended family.

5.5. Taboo-Breaking and Cultural Resistance

Finally, Seema Anand's digital pedagogy on intimacy, pleasure, and aging positions her as a cultural disruptor. Her unapologetic discussions on sex directly challenge taboos that silence conversations on desire in Indian society, particularly for older women. By integrating mythological storytelling with candid conversations, she reframes sexuality as a lifelong right rather than a youthful domain. Anand's work reflects how elderly women can use digital platforms to resist cultural silencing and foster intergenerational education.

6. Synthesis: Aging as Cultural Negotiation

Taken together, the five case studies highlight that elderly engagement on social media in India is not a marginal or accidental phenomenon but a cultural negotiation that challenges entrenched narratives of invisibility, passivity, and decline. Whether through reinvention (Mohan), performance (Sharma), collaboration (Varde), companionship (the Vermas), or taboo-breaking (Anand), these individuals collectively reframe aging as a dynamic and socially relevant stage of life.

Their digital visibility demonstrates how elderly Indians are not merely consumers of content but active producers of culture, inspiration, and knowledge. Social media provides them with platforms to express agency, build communities, and challenge ageist and gendered stereotypes. Importantly, these cases illustrate that aging in the digital age is not homogenous; rather, it takes multiple forms shaped by gender, creativity, familial roles, and socio-cultural contexts.

7. Conclusion

The case studies of Dinesh Mohan, Ravi Bala Sharma, Manjiri Varde, Mr and Mrs Verma, and Seema Anand illuminate the transformative role of social media in reshaping narratives of aging in India. Collectively, these elderly influencers resist the reductive associations of old age with frailty, invisibility, and dependency. Instead, they project diverse identities—ranging from the glamorous model to the dancing grandmother, the humorous artist, the affectionate couple, and the candid mythologist thereby offering alternative imaginaries of later life.

Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, emerge as critical sites of cultural negotiation where elderly individuals assert visibility and relevance. These digital performances do not occur in isolation; they reflect broader shifts in Indian society where intergenerational relationships, consumer culture, and taboos around age, gender, and sexuality are being actively contested. By occupying online spaces traditionally dominated by the young, these figures disrupt intergenerational hierarchies and challenge assumptions about who constitutes the "digital native."

At the same time, their presence highlights the complexities of elderly participation in media. While their stories inspire admiration and open up much-needed conversations, they also reveal the pressures of performance, visibility, and commercialization inherent to digital platforms. The commodification of elderly personas in the form of endorsements, "influencer" culture, and virality raises important questions about how digital economies frame aging as both aspirational and consumable.

Nevertheless, the agency demonstrated by these elderly influencers cannot be understated. Their diverse engagements—whether through reinvention, performance, intergenerational collaboration, companionship, or taboo-breaking—demonstrate that aging in India is not a fixed condition but a dynamic cultural process. These narratives affirm that later life can be a stage of creativity, resilience, and critical resistance.

Ultimately, this exploration underscores the need to reimagine aging in the Indian context beyond biomedical or welfare frameworks, viewing it instead through the lens of media participation, cultural

agency, and digital citizenship. Social media provides elderly individuals not only with platforms of expression but also with opportunities to redefine societal expectations, foster intergenerational dialogue, and claim visibility in spaces where they have historically been absent. By documenting and analyzing such case studies, we gain critical insight into how the elderly are carving out their place within India's rapidly evolving media landscape—asserting that aging, rather than a withdrawal from life, can signify renewed presence, voice, and impact.

8. Recommendations

The case studies highlight how elderly Indians are redefining aging through digital culture, but they also reveal structural gaps that require attention. To bridge the digital divide, governments and civil society should invest in digital literacy programs tailored for older adults. These initiatives would not only enhance technical skills but also promote safe and meaningful online participation. Policy frameworks must further encourage inclusive representation of aging in media, ensuring that elderly individuals are seen as active cultural contributors rather than passive dependents. At the community level, intergenerational collaborations can play a transformative role. Encouraging projects where younger and older people co-create content fosters dialogue and reduces age-based stereotypes. Similarly, cultural programs in universities and community spaces can celebrate elderly creators, strengthening their visibility beyond commercial platforms. Networks of support and mentorship are also essential to help older influencers manage online criticism and the pressures of visibility. From an academic standpoint, aging and media studies need deeper integration. Future scholarship should not only expand documentation of elderly participation online but also critically assess how commercialization of their personas impacts agency and empowerment. Comparative research across the Global South would enrich our understanding of cultural differences in digital aging.

Finally, social media platforms themselves bear responsibility. Designing age-friendly interfaces with accessible features, alongside stronger safeguards against online abuse and ageist trolling, would make digital spaces safer and more inclusive for elderly users. In essence, strengthening digital participation for older adults demands a multi-layered approach through policy, community, scholarship, and technology that recognizes elderly citizens as active shapers of media culture and not merely as symbols of tradition or novelty.

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