

Exploring Interstate Diaspora Experiences Through Instagram: A Netnographic Study of Malayali Migrants in Indian Cities

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Abstract

Academia talks about diaspora a lot. By the word ‘diaspora’, we generally refer to international migrant communities. But internal diaspora is explored very little, especially in relation with media. The research on international migration has proven the fact that media has some impact and role on various stages and aspects of international migration. Also media is a tool to express the migratory experiences.

Indian state borders are not just the indicators of administrative jurisdiction. Those, from the beginning, are indicators of social, cultural and political diversity as India is a country of ‘Unity amidst Diversity.’ It is to be thus noted that when a person moves to one state from another, he/she faces some amount of novel exposures in terms of social norms, culture, culinary systems and political systems among others. Social media is a platform where people share their living experiences from their identity.

In the current study, the researchers analyze the living experiences of interstate diaspora through the analysis of Instagram pages handled by interstate migrants and address the identity of interstate diaspora. The researchers have selected Instagram pages of such nature of Malayali diaspora in different cities outside Kerala within India. The selected pages are *hyderabadi_mallu*, *Bangalore_malayalees*, *mallu_in_mumbai*, *delhi.malayali* and *Chennai_mallus*. Through a netnographic methodological framework and uses and

gratifications theoretical framework, the study analyzes photos, reels, videos, stories, comments and replies to explore on the living experiences of interstate diaspora in India. The study will follow a four step thematic analysis as data analysis method. The study provides insights to the living experiences of interstate diaspora and how it is expressed in social media. It is high time to explore Indian interstate diaspora in relation with new media for the growing numbers of interstate migrants and the diversity of the country.

Keywords: *India, Interstate Diaspora, Interstate Migration, Living Experiences, Social Media, Instagram*

Introduction

In the digital era, social media platforms have transformed the landscape of storytelling, providing individuals with unprecedented opportunities to share their experiences, connect with diverse audiences, and shape narratives that resonate globally. Among these platforms, Instagram stands out as a visual-centric space where users can craft compelling stories through images, captions, reels and hashtags. Interstate migration is a prevalent trend in India due to factors such as education and employment opportunities. According to Kerala Migration Survey 2018, approximately there are 0.524 million out-migrants in various states and UTs of India from Kerala (Rajan et al., 2020). Though declining for various reasons, this number is very significant to be academically investigated through the lens of media and communication. Not only in demography, the research on Indian internal migration also has significance from the perspectives of economics, politics and cultural studies (Bhagat, 2016). Despite the significant number of internal migrants and other factors, research on the media's role in

shaping their experiences remains limited. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the lived experiences of Malayali interstate migrants through their Instagram activities, providing new insights into the intersection of migration, media, and identity.

Significance of the Study

Interstate migration, a pivotal aspect of societal dynamics, plays a crucial role in shaping cultural landscapes and fostering demographic shifts within nations. While international migration often garners significant attention, internal migration within a country remains a compelling yet understudied phenomenon especially in relation with media. India as a country is known for its diversity and how it works as a catalyst for the unity as a nation. State borders are not only administrative divisions, but also the markers of this diversity. This diversity appears in many clothes in front of us. It can be diversity in language, culinary practices, social norms, dressing, geographical features, work culture and many other aspects. So to study interstate migration in India is as important as the scholarly investigation in international migration. Despite this fact, the research body in interstate migration is relatively way smaller that international migration especially in relation with the traditional media and digital media. It is a known fact that media and especially digital media has some roles and also effect in migration in general (Akakpo & Bokpin, 2021; Ju et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2023; Zhao, 2023). But how this trend does works in interstate migration needs to be investigated thoroughly. The current study attempts to direct the investigation to the same. By focusing on the lived experiences of interstate migrants through the lens of Instagram, this study seeks to illuminate the challenges, triumphs, and complexities faced by individuals in their diasporic life and how they use the platform of Instagram as an interstate migrant navigating across state borders. Through an in-depth thematic analysis of these narratives, we aim to add to a deeper knowledge of the multifaceted nature of mobility within national boundaries and the usage of social media throughout.

Instagram as a Platform for Storytelling

Instagram's visual nature and widespread popularity have made it a powerful medium for storytelling and community-building. The five selected Instagram pages serve as digital canvases where interstate migrants share their personal stories, struggles, and aspirations with a global audience. Through carefully curated posts and engaging content, these pages offer a glimpse into the diverse realities of migration within a country, highlighting the resilience and diversity of migrant communities. As we embark on this exploration of interstate migration through Instagram narratives, we aim to uncover the rich tapestry of experiences that define the lives of migrants traversing state borders. By delving into these stories, we hope to shed light on the nuances of migration within a country and amplify voices that are often marginalized or overlooked in mainstream discourse.

Research in Migration and Social Media: A Look Back

The literature on migration and media is mainly focused on international migration. The association amongst media and migration is seen at different levels such as media representation of immigrants and the migrants' use of media (Mahmoud & Al Atrash, 2021). Early research shows that internet had influenced the decision making for people to migrate positively and internet based communication has been used as facilitator of the moving process (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2013). Dekker and Engbersen (2014) highlight how social media facilitates the maintenance of strong ties with family and friends in the homeland, the development of weak ties in the host place, and serves as a vital information source. This study builds on their work by focusing specifically on internal migrants in India, exploring how Instagram serves these functions for Malayali migrants in various Indian cities. Smartphones and digital media are also being used as logistical tool among migrants and refugees (Ennaji & Bignami, 2019). Studies have also explored how social media is used by migrants at different

stages of migration. Social media is used in the transitioning phase for decision making, cushion the anxieties in the settling phase, staying connected in the settled face (Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2020). Social media as a way of building social capital for migrants has also been investigated (Komito, 2011). Looking at the Initiation and maintenance of social networks and building of social capital in internal migration in line with the research and framework in international migration is a main focus of the current study.

Some of the studies are methodologically relevant to the research as it considers digital media platforms as a source of data for migration research. Twitter is used as data source to analyze the patterns of international and internal migration in OECD countries though it mainly pursued quantitative data about migration in-flows and out-flows (Zagheni et al., 2014). Very few studies have particularly addressed the role and effect of media in internal migration. The study of Farre and Fasani (2013) is an example. They studied the association among exposure to mass media and internal mobility.

Detailed review on the relevant literature shows the lack of insights in the relationship between migrants' day-to-day life and digital media in interstate migration setting is in void especially in the case of India. The current study attempts to throw light on this particular area. By integrating findings from both international and internal migration studies, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the media's role in interstate migration.

Methodology

The current study occupies a netnographic approach where the researchers observed and analyzed five Instagram pages representing interstate migrant communities from Kerala in the cities of Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi. The selected social media pages are `hyderabadi_mallu`, `Bangalore_malayalees`, `mallu_in_mumbai`, `delhi.malayali` and

Chennai_mallus. These pages were selected by using keywords such as ‘Malayali’, ‘Mallu’ and ‘Kerala’ along with the respective city names.

The study employed a netnographic approach, which involves observing and analysing online communities to understand their cultural and social dynamics. We selected five Instagram pages representing Malayali communities in Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Delhi based on their active engagement and follower count. Data were collected from posts, videos, photos, reels, comments, and stories published between January and March 2024. This period was chosen to capture a comprehensive snapshot of the migrants' experiences. The data collected then analyzed through a four-step thematic analysis protocol which codes instances to sub-category, category and theme. Studies in digital media have used thematic analysis as a successful method in identifying themes in qualitative data regarding digital

interactions both inside and outside digital media (Francis et al., 2021; Lázaro-Rodríguez, 2021). In the process, the researchers first identified the nature of each items follcategorizing it through two steps. First we sufficed the instances to sub-categories then the more general categories. From this, we identified the themes. An example of the analysis is given in table 1.

Content	Sub-category	Category	Theme
Reel asking where all have the followers stayed in Bengaluru.	Malayali community in Bengaluru	Diasporic community in Hostplace	Social Network as migrants
Reel asking followers to mention their favourite youtuber/Instagrammer	Interaction with followers	Interaction	Social Network as migrants
Reel about a resort in Wayanad	Tourism in Kerala	Tourism in homeplace	Tourism
A reel asking followers to comment any openings in the company they're working so that job seekers among followers can take the help	Professional help to Malayali community in bangalore	Diasporic community in Hostplace	Social Network as migrants
Post about the Kalamandalam Sathyabhama controversy	Social issues in Kerala	Issues in Homeplace	Social and political involvement
Reel about ramadan special street food in Bengaluru	Bengaluru food	Food in Hostplace	Food exploration

Table 1

Operational Definitions

Interstate Migrant: A person who has migrated from his homeplace (i.e. Kerala in this context) to a hostplace within India (five major cities mentioned in this study).

Homeplace: The place that a person migrated from or the place of origin of the migrant is implied through the term 'homeplace.' In this study it is Kerala to be specific.

Hostplace: The place that a person migrated to or the place of destination in called hostplace in this study. There are five host cities are taken up in this study which are Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai.

Diaspora: A general definition of diaspora would be a population that spread across regions that are not their homeland. For the purpose of the current research, we are internalizing this definition and making some changes. In the current study 'Diaspora' would mean the Kerala population outside Kerala within India including first generation migrants.

Malayali: A native of the state of Kerala (A state in India).

Objectives of the Study

1. Explore the living experiences of interstate migrants from Kerala in various cities of India.
2. Explore the use of Instagram for expression of the migrant identity among interstate migrants from Kerala.

Theoretical Framework

The theory known as Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) provides a framework for comprehending the gratifications that entice and keep consumers on various media platforms, based on their personal needs and preferences. It helps us understand how individuals actively

choose media to fulfil specific needs such as information, entertainment, and social interaction (Whiting & Williams, 2013). This theory explores the ways in which people consciously choose media to meet particular requirements, including informational, recreational, social, and relaxational needs. In the realm of social media research, UGT plays a pivotal role in dissecting user behavior and intentions, as underscored by scholarly sources. Notably, a study published in Emerald Insight highlights the direct influence of UGT on usage intention in social media platforms like Facebook. The study demonstrates that the relationship between UGT and usage intention is mediated by user habit and subjective norm, highlighting the relevance of the theory in understanding user behavior on social networking sites (Hossain, 2019). Additionally, another scholarly article explores the application of the UGT approach to discern motivating elements in media usage, showcasing the theory's adaptability in elucidating user motivations across various media platforms, including social media (Whiting & Williams, 2013). In summary, the UGT offers a valuable approach to dissect why individuals opt to interact with social media platforms, providing insights into their motivations, behaviors, and preferences driven by the gratifications they seek. In the current study, UGT has been employed to identify how Instagram is used by interstate migrants to express their migratory and diasporic experiences and other needs as an interstate migrant.

Social capital theory, rooted in sociology and economics, refers to the means entrenched in social networks that individuals can access for mutual benefit. It encompasses trust, norms, and values that facilitate cooperation and collective action (Putnam, 2000). Scholars like Putnam emphasize the importance of social connections in fostering civic engagement and community well-being. Lin's network-based social capital focuses on resources within social networks that individuals can mobilize (Lin, 2001). Social capital theory has been applied in various fields, including education, psychology, and economics, to understand how social relationships influence outcomes. In social media research, social capital theory is used to analyze how

online interactions and networks contribute to information sharing, collaboration, and community building, reflecting the broader societal impact of digital connections on social capital formation (Ellison et al., 2007).

In this study, UGT is used to analyse how Malayali interstate migrants use Instagram to meet their informational, social, and recreational needs, while Social Capital Theory helps us understand how these interactions contribute to community building and social support among migrants.

Findings

A total of 414 and three items has been analyzed out of which 111 are posts and 303 are stories. Details of items analyzed from each pages can be seen in table 2. In addition to this, comments appeared below the posts have also been analyzed.

		Type		Total
		Post	Story	
Page	Bangalore_malayalees	81	189	270
	hyderabadi_mallu	1	82	83
	mallu_in_mumbai	28	16	44
	delhi.malayali	1	7	8
	Chennai_mallus	0	9	9
Total		111	303	414

Table 1

We have identified 15 themes from the thematic analysis which are exhibited in table 3.

Theme	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Social and political involvement	146	35.3	35.3
Food exploration	74	17.9	53.1
Day-to-Day life as a migrant	48	11.6	64.7
Social Network as migrants	38	9.2	73.9
Economic identity as a migrant	31	7.5	81.4
Food as identity	22	5.3	86.7
Tourism	20	4.8	91.5
Sports	8	1.9	93.5
Cinema	7	1.7	95.2
Malayali identity	6	1.4	96.6
Recreation	5	1.2	97.8
Music	4	1.0	98.8
Connecting homeplace and hostplace	2	.5	99.3
Nostalgia	2	.5	99.8
Migration literature	1	.2	100.0
Total	414	100.0	

Table 2

Most of the items analyzed are comes under the theme of social and political involvement followed by food exploration.

Now let's see where each theme is taking us further.

Social and political Involvement

Social and political involvement is a major trend that has been observed in the analysis. This can be just information sharing about some happenings around or the involvement in complex social and political issues. It can be politics, government decisions, health, crime or any other

issues that concerns the society. But what attracts the attention of this research is that how much it is connected to the hostplace as well as homeplace. Table 4 demonstrates the trend in this.

Attribution	Number of Items
Hostplace	88
Homeplace	8
General	50
Total	146

Table 3

As we can see, most of the social and political involvement was about the hostplace whereas the involvement in the social and political happenings of the homeplace i.e Kerala is very minimal. While a post about Bangalore’s water scarcity marks the social and political involvement in the hostplace, a reel about street fights in Kerala is an example for addressing social and political issues in the homeplace.

Food: Adaptation, Exploration and Identity

Food exploration emerged as a major theme, reflecting both adaptation and identity. For instance, posts about local Bangalorean cuisine (e.g., 'Hyderabadi Biryani' and 'Bangalore street food') highlight how migrants adapt to their host place. Simultaneously, posts about traditional Kerala dishes ('Pothichor' and 'Porottayum Beefum') signify efforts to maintain cultural identity. This dual approach to food reflects a balancing act between embracing new experiences and preserving one's heritage. This theme has four major components; (1) Exploring the cuisine of the hostplace, (2) Keeping in touch with the cuisine of homeplace i.e. Kerala, (3) exploring other food cultures and (4) homeplace food in hostplace. Component (1) is coded as food adaptation whereas component (3) is coded as food exploration. Component

(2) and (4) are coded as Food as identity. A detailed demonstration of these trends can be seen in Table 5.

Component	Number of Items
Homeplace food	4
Homeplace food in hostplace	18
Food in hostplace	65
Exploring other food culture	9
Total	96

Table 4

It is evident that while keeping ties with the homeplace in terms of culinary practices, they actively explore the food culture of the hostplace and also culinary cultures that of other than hostplace or homeplace. This trend may have resulted from the increasing availability of different cuisines in Indian cities.

Social Network as Migrants

Social network as migrants is also a major theme that is identified in the thematic analysis. By social network, we mean the concept of interconnectedness of individuals in society. Social network can be divided into offline and online. By offline we mean the photos and videos posted updated about the Malayali community in the hostplace and their gathering and networking. In the online social networking, we could see the interactions in the comment box and other types of interactions such as Q&A sessions. Table 6 provides a comprehensive understanding about this theme.

Attribution	Number of Items
Diasporic community in the hostplace	26
Interactions (Excluding the interactions in comment section)	12
Total	38

Table 5

Day-to-Day life as a Migrant

Representation of the day-to-day life as a migrant is also a leading theme found in the analysis. This theme includes the celebrations, posts and stories about the culture and beauty of the hostplace, various aspects of city life as migrant, day-to-day happenings in hostplace among other things. Details are exhibited in table 7.

Component	Number of Items
Day-to-day life and happenings in hostplace	25
City life	8
Tiredness of the City/Professional life	6
Beauty of Hostplace	5
Migration Aspirations vs Reality	3
Culture and Celebrations in Hostplace	2
Total	49

Table 6

Most of the items in this theme are about the happenings in the hostplace. It can be a pink blossom in Bangalore city, or something amusing the admin has seen in the city or some event to be conducted. In addition to this, the beauty of the hostplace and culture and celebrations are also among the components that have been represented.

Not only the positive aspects, the negative aspects also been represented in these posts and stories. There are some memes about the expectations of migrating to a metropolitan city and

the reality. There are also stories about the weariness of living in a city as a migrant or the need of getting a weekend escape from the city.

Tourism

Another important theme identified in the analysis is tourism. The pages have actively posted their tourism experiences in both the hostplace and homeplace. Here is an overview of tourism related contents identified (Table 8).

Component	Number of Items
Tourism in Hostplace	17
Tourism in Homeplace	3
Total	20

Table 7

Like other themes, tourism also marked lenience towards the hostplace. Pages have posted lion share of the posts about tourism in and around the hostplace whereas a small number of posts is also dedicated to home place i.e. Kerala. Hostplace tourism is about the visit to the places within hostplace and nearby places and states as well.

Other themes

A few posts have been identified in the themes of sports (8), cinema (7), music (4) and recreation (5). Music and cinema, however, stands in aberration for the fact that there is no connection at all with hostplace in these two themes. All seven items about cinema and all four items about music is related to homeplace such as Malayalam music or music by Malayalam singers and Malayalam cinema. Expression of Malayali identity is also there among the themes that are minimally represented.

Speaking about sports the trend is again going back to the lenience towards hostplace where five of the six items are about sports related to hostplace and one is related to homeplace. These

are mostly about domestic football and cricket leagues. Recreation, although is general in nature with no much connection to homeplace or hostplace.

A couple of items can be seen connecting homeplace and hostplace. This majorly happened when a football league match happened between Kerala and the hostplace or the comparison between the weathers of both place.

A few of the items are within the theme nostalgia and interestingly, it is about the nostalgia of the hostplace. The researchers have searched for the nostalgia of homeplace. Even though it is not obvious, we could track some kind of nostalgia of homeplace in the posts about food.

A post has also talked about the literature in migration/migration literature. Economic identity of migrant is also a theme identified where the entrepreneurship of a migrant in the hostplace is highlighted in the posts and stories. However, it is not a recurrent theme.

Major themes in Comments

This section of the findings doesn't follow a quantitative structure due to the large amount of the contents in comments section. Instead we try to draw the general themes in the comments section by going through the comments of each post during the study period which are:

Experience sharing: commentators sharing their experiences that are similar/related to the content of the post based on their life experiences in the host city.

Opinion sharing: commentators sharing their opinion related to the content of a post.

Information seeking: It is a major theme in comments. Examples are asking the location of particular places or happenings.

Expressing their love for the hostplace: Some responses use emojis, sometimes words to convey their affection for the hostplace or how much they miss it.

Answering the questions in posts: More engagement can be seen in these types of posts where the page is asking some questions such as favourite foodplace or place of stay. The migrants can be seen actively sharing their answers to these questions.

Criticism: In certain posts related to social and political involvement, commentators are also participating in the discussions about the issues and solutions.

Making it funny: A general trend of making the negative experiences funny can be seen in the comment section.

Local participation: Though very less, we could observe that locals of the hostplace also is commenting in these posts both in a positive and negative manner.

Participation of Malayali users from other places: Users who are not a migrant of a particular hostplace are also observed actively engaging in the comment section.

Comments can be seen as a place of social network which can tackle the monotonous nature of the study when it is only focused on the communication from one side. Interestingly commentators also share the various aspects of migrant identity and experiences as it is shared by these pages studied. It can be social and political involvement, food exploration or food nostalgia or experiences in the day-to-day life as a migrant.

Discussion

Our findings align with Dekker and Engbersen's (2014) observation that social media facilitates both strong and weak tie networks among migrants. The active engagement in social and political issues in the host place suggests that interstate migrants use Instagram not only for maintaining connections but also for community activism and support. This underscores the importance of social media as a tool for social capital building in diasporic communities. Future research should explore these dynamics further, considering different migrant groups and

social media platforms. Here Instagram functioned as a source of data and as a platform of study. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will be dealing with the living experiences of interstate migrants identified from the analysis. The second part is mainly focused on how Instagram, as a social media/social networking platform, used for the various aspects of migratory life and identity.

Living experience of Interstate migrants

In this study migrants are not observed passive in their life as migrants. They are observing and reflecting on the various happenings in and around them. One major example is the social and political involvement of migrants. Aricat's (2015) in his study argued that the digital space used as a place of political engagement among Indian migrants in Singapore despite not leading to any offline action. Same trend can be seen here. But in the case of interstate migration, migrants are more comfortable in discussing about the socio-political issues in Instagram through posts, stories and comments. This can be due to the same national identity. Contents from the water crisis in their hostplace to protests against the government policies can be seen in the items shared by the analyzed pages. Figure 1 and 2 presents some of the contents shared by the pages (names of the pages has been removed). The difference between figure 1 and 2 is that both general socio-political issues and issues that are specific to the hostplace are actively addressed by the migrants. The trend is further visible in table 3. It is also notable that the social and political involvement is extended to the issues of homeplace also, but not as much as it is in the hostplace.

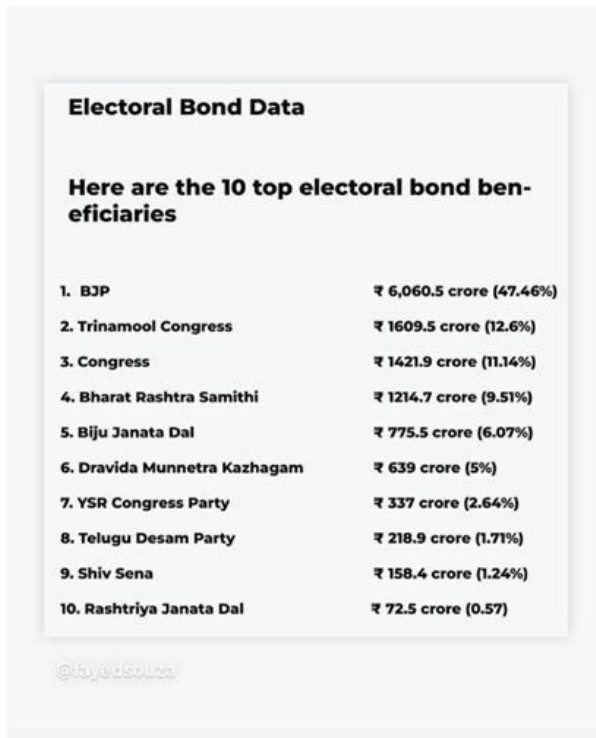


Figure 1



Figure 2

A major theme in international migration research is the culinary habits of migrants. Food, among the many tools of cultural identity (Montanari, 2006) is frequently investigated by migration scholars to see the changes in the practices of food consumption (Mishra & Anand, 2020; Parasecoli, 2014). Findings of these studies mostly marks the changes made in dietary and culinary habits of migrants both internal and international. Findings of the current study signifies these past studies as the contents of these pages related to food has a huge leap towards food of the hostplace which is three times higher than the food of homeplace. Though the results of this particular study are insufficient to argue that this is the trend in the day-to-day migrant food consumption, it can show the interest in local food and local foodplaces of the hostplace among migrants from Kerala. We can label this trend as ‘food adaptation.’ Another trend that we could observe is the hunt for ‘homeplace food in hostplace.’ This is another and more wider form of keeping ties with the homeplace as a migrant (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014). ‘Nikkah biriyani,’ ‘pothichor,’ or ‘porottayum beefum’ (famous dishes of Kerala) are

frequently sought after in the hostplace whether it is Bangalore, Hyderabad or Mumbai. We have labeled this trend as ‘Food as identity’ because the migrants keep their original food habits and search for them to some extent despite having a whole lot of other options. It can be assumed that they are trying to reassure their identity as a migrant from Kerala. Beyond both of these trends, migrants are also exploring the food that is not connected to homeplace or hostplace taking leverage of globalization and the city life (Figures 3, 4 and 5).



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

The researchers could also draw some insights on the day-to-day experiences of migrants. Migration occurs for various reasons such as education and employment. But regardless of these causes, migrants seem to be aware of their identity as a migrant in their day-to-day life. This factor takes both positive and negative aspects of this awareness. Migrants are enjoying the small and big happenings of their hostplace such as a cherry blossom in Bangalore, cultural heritage of Hyderabad, architectural aesthetics of Mumbai, transportation facilities in Chennai and the mornings of Delhi. The pages are also seen sharing some of the important information regarding the hostplace such as transport closures and event occurring in the city. On the other hand, migrants are also expressing about some of the negative experiences also. Some of them are directly related to migration and some are related to city life or professional life. A meme

was posted by one of the pages analyzed about the difference between migration aspirations and reality (figure 6). Recent research in international migration also have marked this huge gap between this expectation vs. reality of migration (Lu & Samaratunge, 2016). This again is particularly connected to the representation of destinations in media and the media exposure of migrants in the decision making stage. At least in popular culture, moving out of Kerala is associated with a freer and liberal life. Tiredness of living in a city as a professional and the need for a weekend escape are some of the things expressed by these pages.



Figure 6

As we already mentioned about the food exploration, place exploration in and around the hostplace is also a recurring theme in the analysis. Migrants tend to explore destination in and around the hostplace approximately 6 times more that the places in the homeplace.

Along with the culinary habits, cinema and music are also used to keep ties with the homeplace I.e. Kerala as all the items about cinema and music about music and cinema of Kerala and not one about in the hostplace. This trend related to popular culture among interstate migrants should be investigated in more depth.

Migrants' Use of Instagram

Diasporic expression in social media is a prevalent area in global migration research (Aguila, 2014; Dhoest & Szulc, 2016; Diminescu & Loveluck, 2014; NurMuhammad et al., 2016). The current study could observe various kinds of expressions from the analyzed pages. In this part we attempt to explore on these theme with the help of UGT and Social Capital.

Nature of Expression

The most important factor here to be taken into consideration is that the migrants are aware and active about their migratory identity. It is obvious from the names of the pages analyzed as all of which clubs the homeplace and hostplace. These two components are joined in pages analyzed and not analyzed. The identity of being Keralite is expressed through different terms. Some have use 'Malayali' and some have used 'Mallu' which is again a short and a more relaxed form of 'Malayali.' This is not only the case of interstate migration but a parallel between international and internal diaspora. We can see pages like 'finland mallu,' 'Australiam Mallu,' That is about names. Looking at the posts and stories, whom we could see is a migrant or a group of migrants, not a person who resides in a city. This is done through many ways including the mix of both Malayalam and English languages, expressing concerns over issues in both homeplace and hostplace, exploring the connections between homeplace and hostplace, etc.

Use of Language

All the pages analyzed are using a mix of both Malayalam and English. The implication here is, while they deliberately expressive about their migratory identity, they try to reach a wider audience beyond the specific diasporic community and try to build larger social networks and sometimes an economic identity through the diasporic identity. This is one perk that is coming

from the use of social media. For example, Bengaluru is a city of interstate migrants. Diaspora in Bengaluru is not only sufficed to those who are from Kerala but from all over India. Same is the case with Hyderabad, Mumbai, Chennai or Delhi more or less. So beyond Malayali community in Bangalore, these pages can also provide some kind of relatability to the other migrant communities also. Besides, they can also attract Malayali diasporic communities in other places and the people of Kerala in general. The reason is the commonalities between all the mentioned populations with each other. These possibilities were explored through the multilingual handling of the pages. Interestingly, we could not find some significant examples of the usage of the local language of the hostplace.

Social Networking and Capital Building

As we mentioned earlier, another help provided by social media is observed to be social capital building. Social capital is an idea emerged from the likes of Bourdieu (Julien, 2015) which is the networks, relationships, and shared values within a community or society that facilitate cooperation and collective action. International migrants' use of social media for social capital building is a hot topic (Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Holmes & Janson, 2008; Naffi & Davidson, 2017). Social media is also a tool to build social capital through social networking. Social networking is mainly done through the comment section where people with similar attitudes, opinions, experiences and locations interact with each other and the admins of the page. Often times, some questions are asked by pages in posts and stories about the locations of followers, the company/sector they are working in, etc. This leads to an unofficial data about the people around for the admins and also for the followers who are actively engaging in these interactions which leads to building an effective diasporic social capital (see figure 7, 8 and 9). Networking has been done through Q&As and other forms of interactions through stories also. These interactions lead to a wider social networks and it results in enhanced social capital as a

diasporic community. These findings go along with the findings of Komito (2011) from the study done among international in-migrants in Ireland.



Figures 7, 8 & 9 respectively

(‘Nattil Evideya’ can be roughly translated as ‘Are you from which place in Kerala’)

The social capital building is not only applicable to the pages and the people behind it, but also to the followers who are actively engaged in the social networking through comment section and participations in other forms of interactions. Comments could be seen as seeking informations, sharing experiences, commenting opinions, and all a part of networking which leads to capital building. For the followers, the page is functioning as a platform for this kind of networking without much effort from their side. In Q&As also we can see questions enquiring about foodplaces and various information regarding education, health and job opportunities. These are all ways of building the networks and knowledge about the hostplace through which the social capital is built further.

Expression of Concerns

A major gratification for using the social media is identified to be the expression of concerns. As a migrant, an issue in the hostplace would be more challenging than the locals of that place for various reasons including lack of adequate social network and capital. But social media can function as a cushion (Ihejirika & Krtalic, 2020) in such situations. We could see items where it is posted about the various crises such as water crises, crimes in and around the city, etc.

posting about this can create awareness among others and create a sense of safety in both the groups: the communicators and the communicated.

The living experiences of interstate migrants is of importance to both theory and praxis in terms of demography, political, social and cultural aspects (Bhagat, 2016). On a theoretical level, identifying and mapping the living experiences and its mediation of interstate migrants, especially in Indian setting is very important due to the cultural, social, linguistic and political diversities of the country. This is not only an Indian phenomenon, but Indian social and cultural characteristics can act as a framework for an investigation like this. The current study is able to throw some light on this aspect. But further research is required as it is an under investigated field. Along with adopting epistemological approaches used in international migration and diaspora, it is equally important to take the nature and characteristics of the regions studied.

As for praxis, how media can be used for the well-being of migrants has to be further investigated. This area of investigation is capable of providing policy directions to governmental and non-governmental actors. But it is high-time for interstate migration to be considered as an equally important form of migration as international migration by all actors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the multifaceted experiences of Malayali interstate migrants as expressed through Instagram. Key themes such as social and political involvement, food adaptation, and social networking illustrate how migrants navigate their identities in the digital space. Through the four step thematic analysis method, various themes emerged, shedding light on the multifaceted aspects of interstate migrants' lives. From social and political involvement to food exploration and identity formation through culinary practices, the study captured the intricate tapestry of interstate diaspora experiences. By examining the everyday life narratives portrayed on these platforms, a deeper understanding of the challenges and cultural adaptations of migrants was attained. This research not only contributes to the academic discourse on diaspora studies but also serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, community organizers, and individuals interested in fostering cross-cultural understanding and solidarity. We could observe some parallels in the nature of diasporic engagement and the use of Instagram in this regard with international migration. There are some differences too. The major takeaway of this study would be the active nature of praxis of migrant identity. While migrants use tools as tourism and food to explore the migrant experiences, tools such as cinema and music to keep rooted to their identity of being a 'Malayali. More studies in this regard are needed. The use of social media as a migrant facilitates many uses and gratifications including capital building and social and political involvement. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on migration and media studies, emphasizing the need for further research on internal migration dynamics. Future studies should consider longitudinal approaches to capture changes over time and explore other social media platforms for a more comprehensive understanding. Moving forward, further exploration into the nuances of interstate diaspora experiences, utilizing diverse methodological approaches, will enrich our comprehension of migration dynamics in an increasingly interconnected world. Future research can specifically be directed

towards positioning particular themes in diasporic life and exploring the various facets of it such as the lenience towards homeplace or hostplace, maintaining strong ties or developing weak ties among other aspects. Above all, an overall mediatized look to internal migration, especially interstate migration is the need of the hour.

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