India’s Mediated Public Diplomacy on Social Media: Building Agendas and National Reputation in South Asia

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This dissertation titled
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Abstract

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India’s Mediated Public Diplomacy on Social Media: Building Agendas and National Reputation in South Asia

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One tool in India’s mediated public diplomacy is the increasing use of social media platforms to build agendas and national reputation among foreign audiences. In 2017, the Indian government ranks seventh in the world in its use of social media for diplomacy and has more than 1.2 million users following its diplomatic accounts on several social media platforms. Despite this high ranking and a sizable following on social media, little research has been done to understand India’s mediated public diplomacy through Twitter and Facebook. To address this literature gap, this study investigates India’s mediated public diplomacy on social media in South Asia based on the theoretical models of agenda building and reputation building.

First, the agenda-building model was examined through both a quantitative analysis of content published on 15 Indian government social media accounts and a survey of the social media users who follow these accounts. A total of 6,000 tweets and status updates published on the 15 accounts of the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Diplomacy, and embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were analyzed. Second, a reputation-building model surveyed national reputation factors for India such as engagement, online social relations, and information sources among social media users.
Results show that there is an agenda-building linkage between the Indian government agendas and the agendas of South Asian social media users. Politics, culture, economy/finance, and infrastructure were the top-ranked agendas of the Indian government on social media. For social media users, the top-ranked agendas were education, health and medicine, environment, economy/finance, and infrastructure. Results also show that social media engagement and information sources such as traditional media from the social media users’ home country and social networking sites predict national reputation. However, factors such as the strength of online social relations and Indian information sources (both traditional and online) do not predict national reputation for India.

This study makes several contributions to the emerging field of mediated public diplomacy on social media. First, it provides an exploratory account of how India mediates public diplomacy on Facebook and Twitter in South Asia. Second, the agenda building study contributes empirical evidence from measures of perceptions of social media users in South Asia. Third, it takes a quantitative approach that supports the theoretical propositions of scholars that social media is an important mediated public diplomacy tool, particularly for national reputation building in India and to some extent, South Asia.
Dedication

For my parents, who taught me destiny is what you make of it. Thank you for raising me to be a strong, independent woman.

For Prasad, whose understanding and patience is immeasurable. Thank you for being my best friend.

For peace and prosperity in South Asia.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

This study examines mediated public diplomacy on social media from the theoretical perspectives of agenda building and reputation building. Taking India’s mediated public diplomacy in South Asia as a case, the focus is on the agendas and efforts to build national reputation of India among citizens of other countries in the region. The study also examines factors such as engagement, social relations, and information sources that explain perceptions about the national reputation of India among users on Twitter and Facebook.

Social media facilitate the reciprocity of agendas between nations and their target audiences. Governments communicate policy and cultural agendas to engage social media users in conversations and to build national reputation overtime (Bjola, 2015). In the case of India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi used Twitter to announce a ‘pit-stop’ visit to meet Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (Haidar, 2015) and sent birthday wishes to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (Yao & Jie, 2015). Additionally, the Indian government’s notable diplomatic efforts on social media targeted particularly towards Asians include aiding a Pakistani bride and an Indonesian couple to secure Indian visas and providing consular services to citizens during the 2015 Nepal earthquake (Manor, 2015). Despite the increasing use of social media for public diplomacy, Bjola (2015) pointed out that social media’s success in achieving public diplomacy objectives are still understudied. Furthermore, scholars also call for quantified measures to determine the success of mediated public diplomacy (Golan, 2017). As such, this study takes a
quantitative approach to examine the mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia, especially in the social media context.

The mediated public diplomacy campaigns of India implemented via social media are likely to promote the government’s agendas of increased economy, trade, and infrastructural development in South Asia (Malone, 2011; Sibal, 2009). Through the mediated public diplomacy on social media, India can counter negative reputation and the undermined public diplomacy efforts as a result of a long-standing Kashmir dispute with Pakistan, political interference in Nepal, and illegal migration from Bangladesh (Behuria & Dahiya, 2012). A few scholars have analyzed Indian public diplomacy on social media but their propositions are limited to commentaries either on the social media initiatives (Natarajan, 2014) or on the structural changes in the Indian public diplomacy due to the emergence of Twitter (Sharma, 2016). These scholars did not extend their investigations to the underlying agendas that the Indian state actors promote. Moreover, they did not explore the social media factors that lead to building national reputation for India as a result of its mediated public diplomacy efforts on Twitter and Facebook. This limited scope in the current literature necessitates examining mediated public diplomacy of India.

Mediated public diplomacy is approached here through two frameworks: First, is the model of agenda building concerning the Indian government accounts on social media and the users who follow these accounts. Second, is the reputation building model investigating the social media factors that are likely to predict national reputation for India among social media users. Agenda building is the process through which the government makes certain agendas prominent for the public (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976).
Hence, through a quantitative analysis of content that the Indian government publishes on its social media accounts and surveys of social media users, the study examines the agenda building model. The content published on the Indian government accounts of the Ministry of External Affairs, *Indian Diplomacy*, and the Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka on Twitter and Facebook is considered.

National reputation building refers to collective judgments about a foreign country’s culture, policy and behavior that define its national image (Mercer, 1996; Wang, 2006). Scholars have taken interdisciplinary approaches of nation building (Taylor & Kent, 2006), nation branding (Anholt, 2016), and more recently place branding (Govers & Go, 2016) and the model of country concept (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017) to measure national reputation. National reputation here is the sum total of perceptions of social media users towards India on aspects of political, emotional, cultural, economic and regional standing. One of the reliable indicators of national reputation is public opinion; hence, this study measures national reputation through a survey of Twitter and Facebook users, who follow the Indian government accounts considered in the agenda building model. The study employs the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index that Kiambi (2017), Seo (2010) and Yang et al. (2008), and others have employed to examine national reputation. For this study, the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index was modified to measure the regional appeal of India among South Asian social media users.

A few factors such as familiarity of citizens with a nation through direct and indirect experiences (Kiambi, 2017), online social relationships with people from a nation
(Seo, 2010), type of communication channels (Yang, et al., 2008) and tourism (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017) are found to influence national reputation. However, in the social media context, factors such as citizens’ online engagement, their online social relations, and the sources they use to get information about a nation are likely to predict national reputation. Out of these, online engagement and type of information sources influence the reputation of corporate firms (Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016; Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). However, the relationship of these social media factors on national reputation is still understudied. This study adds to this dearth in literature by investigating how the factors of online engagement, online social relations, and type of information sources operate in the context of India’s mediated public diplomacy.

In his prominent work, Anholt (2016) argued that countries are like global corporate brands involved in a contest to attract investments, immigrants, respect, and trust. Government officials are engaged in the strategic management of their nation’s image to positively influence citizens. As a result, the study proceeds with the assumption that engagement of citizens as social media users with the Indian government on Twitter and Facebook is likely to predict their perceptions about India’s reputation. Along with engagement, relationships between the following factors to explain perceptions of the national reputation of India among social media users is investigated:

(i) The strength of social media users’ online social relations.

(ii) The type of sources (traditional versus online) to get information about India.
Thus, one of the research questions examines which of these factors predict the national reputation for India among social media users. Another research question asks: What is the ranking order of agendas prominent on the Indian government accounts on social media compared to agendas that social media users rank prominently on Twitter and Facebook? A third research question investigates: What type of information sources among ‘traditional sources’ and ‘online sources’ controlling for age, employment status, and education predict the national reputation of India? Other research questions and hypotheses are stated in Chapter 5.

**Rationale for the Study**

Scholarly approaches to mediated public diplomacy are inter-disciplinary and multifaceted (Entman, 2008; Fullterton & Kendrick, 2017). Moreover, mediated public diplomacy conducted on social media is a relatively new phenomenon. Over the past five years, empirical research in this arena has focused mainly on evaluating public diplomacy by analyzing the outcomes, but not the process of public diplomacy campaigns (Pamment, 2014). Scholars such as Sandre (2015) and Seib (2016) provided critical commentaries on how public diplomacy needs to be conducted, but they do not evaluate its operation in the social media sphere, especially in the context of South Asia.

Taking the lead from developed nations such as the United States (U.S.) and the United Kingdom, India has integrated social media in its mediated public diplomacy efforts. The Facebook account of Indian Ministry of External Affairs has 1.2 million followers, which is second only to that of the U.S. Department of State’s Facebook page (Kotoky, 2016). Diplomacy Live, a global research and consulting firm, ranks India
seventh out of 210 nations in social media diplomacy rankings for 2016. Despite a large following on social media, little has been done to understand what content the Indian government accounts publish to build agendas and reputation among social media users.

Although there is a vast amount of research on the influence of social networking sites on entities in the political milieu, scholars have still not completely understood their impact on agenda-building forces (Gilboa, 2016; Conway, Kenski & Wang, 2015). Scholars such as Garud-Patkar and Kalyango (2017) state that the Indian political parties are using tweets as information subsidies and building international relations, economy and other agendas that are the same agendas built through the traditional means of press releases and newspapers. But what agendas is the Indian government building in South Asian using as part of its mediated public diplomacy on social media is still unknown.

In terms of the online platforms, this study considers the agendas and reputation-building efforts mediated via Twitter and Facebook. Other social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Sino Weibo, and Pinterest are also used by the Indian embassies in the South Asian region to conduct mediated public diplomacy. However, the focus here is on Twitter and Facebook because these two networks allow the broadcast of text-based posts that can sometimes be embedded with photographs and videos. These posts or updates are regarded as traditional information subsidies from the government (Conway, Kenski & Wang, 2015). Although Twitter limits the content of an update to 280 characters, its unidirectional connections ensure that content is not hidden from users due to privacy settings (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This characterizes Twitter as one of the fastest information delivery platforms. Facebook does not have a character limit and
allows long conversations and engagement with followers (Wang, Kim, Xiao & Jung, 2017). According to Internet World Stats as of March 31, 2017 there are 21 million active Facebook users in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka). In case of Twitter, India has 26.7 million Twitter users (statista.com, 2017), whereas this number is extremely low with Pakistan having only three million users (Geo TV, 2017). An estimate of Twitter users in other South Asian nations is not known to be conducted.

**Research Objectives**

This study examines the mediated public diplomacy model from two approaches: a policy-based approach using the theory of agenda building and a relationship-based approach using the theory of reputation building. The two theories share a reciprocal relationship and are related through mediated public diplomacy. Agenda building examines the content that the Indian government publishes to influence social media users whereas reputation building examines the perceptions of these social media users about the Indian government through surveys.

The main reasons for conducting this investigation is to determine:

(i) Agendas that the Indian government builds on social media and their relationship with the perceived agendas of social media users in South Asia;

(ii) Public opinion about India’s reputation among social media users in South Asia;

(iii) Factors that predict national reputation in the social media context.
Public diplomacy experts argue that Western scholars have dominated research in mediated public diplomacy conducted through social media, with recent studies focusing mostly on the public diplomacy of the United States (Gilboa, 2016; Hocking & Melissen, 2015). Hence, this study adds value to the mediated public diplomacy literature three-fold: first, it examines mediated public diplomacy through Twitter and Facebook targeted towards South Asians, thereby, extending its empirical analysis beyond the Western context. Second, it broadens the agenda-building perspective through its application to a social media context. Third, it examines factors such as online engagement, online social relations, and information sources in the social media context that explain perceptions of national reputation of India. Both the quantitative content analysis and the surveys aim to determine how agenda building and national reputation work in the process of India’s mediated public diplomacy conducted via social media in the South Asian region.

To conduct the content analysis, data were collected from Twitter and Facebook in April 2017 using Twitter API and Facebook Graph API. All the tweets and updates were collected from the first data posted since the launch date of each of the Indian government accounts until April 30, 2017. For the surveys, social media users who follow the Indian government accounts considered in the content analysis were examined. The surveys were collected between June and July 2017 to investigate the extent to which the social media context is likely to bolster mediated public diplomacy efforts of India.

**Organization of the Study**

This study proceeds with Chapter 2 tracing the historical roots of diplomacy from the 11th century to the mediated social media diplomacy of the 21st century. It also
examines the impact of the Internet on public diplomacy and enumerates cases where nations use social media for diplomatic activities. Also reviewed is the literature on the role of soft power in public diplomacy. Chapter 3 chronicles the public diplomacy of India during the pre-and-post colonial era and the nation’s journey towards integrating technology into public diplomacy. The chapter also reviews India’s role in South Asia and its relationships with its neighboring countries. The foreign policy objectives of India with the seven neighboring nations considered here are also discussed. Chapter 4 reviews relevant literature on the agenda building and reputation building models. It explicates these two theoretical perspectives, traces their history and identifies their utility in the case of India’s public diplomacy. The relationships of the models with mediated public diplomacy and social media are also examined.

Chapter 5 examines factors such as engagement on social media, online social relations and information sources and their relationship with the concept of national reputation. Research questions and hypotheses investigated in this study are also explained. The sixth chapter delineates the content analysis and survey methodologies for this research endeavor. Also explained is the process of data extraction from Twitter and Facebook and the operational definitions of the core concepts employed in the study. Chapters 7 analyzes the data and presents the results. The agendas that the Indian government builds on social media are enumerated. The chapter uses statistical measures to explain the relationships between the national reputation of India and online engagement, online social relations, and information sources. Chapter 8 discusses the key results from the data, the limitations of the study, and the prospects for future research.
Recommendations to the Indian government for improving its public diplomacy strategies are provided.
Chapter 2: Examining the Origins of Public Diplomacy

A fruitful starting point to understand any subject is to start with its history. For this purpose, this chapter examines the beginnings of diplomacy from the 11th century to mediated public diplomacy in the 21st century. It investigates the varied conceptualizations and manifestations of diplomacy while examining its relationship with propaganda, public relations, and soft power. The influence of power relations between Western and non-Western nations that impact public diplomacy are also reviewed. Finally, the chapter concludes with perspectives on the role of technology and social media in mediated public diplomacy.

Medieval Period

The beginning of diplomacy can be tracked centuries before Edmund Gullion, the dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, coined the term public diplomacy in 1965. Although the exact date is difficult to trace, historians state that the art of diplomatic persuasion began in the 11th century with envoys convincing rulers that it was “better to hear a message than to eat the messenger” (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011, p. 7). Their efforts ensured the establishment of universal diplomatic immunity for themselves. Wright (2006) pointed out that all the civilizations of the ancient world—from Vedic India, the Cretan Minoans and the Greek Mycenaeans of the Mediterranean, the Assyrians and Babylonians of the Near East, to the tribes of Bronze Age Europe—employed envoys to foster regional alliances.

Ambassadors of this period, just like modern-day diplomats, mediated communication between rulers, promoted trade between cities, formed alliances between
warring empires and carried out official orders or dynastic marriages. However, they
carried out these duties from within their own safeguarded kingdoms.

At the end of the 16th century, the Italian city of Milan sent the first representative
to France. Soon, other European nations such as France and Spain followed as they began
sponsoring diplomatic missions to give momentum to their political interests in the region
(Pamment, 2013). This established the tradition of appointing permanent envoys that
resulted in the conception of diplomacy as a foreign policy instrument.

Given their role in the negotiations between warring nations in Europe, envoys
grew in power. Freeman and Marks (2016) stated that Richelieu, a French Cardinal,
recognized the need to control envoys to have a centralized policymaking system, which
led to the establishment of the first Ministry of External Affairs in France in 1626. For
Richelieu, diplomacy was an ongoing cycle of negotiation to increase the reputation of a
nation and its ruler (Hare, 2015). Richelieu ensured that one diplomat pursued a single
agenda at a time that led to the creation of separate departments such as those dealing
with wars and foreign policy but managed by a single ministry. Richelieu’s contributions
are vital to the current art of statecraft because he advocates disregarding influences such
as religious interference in the persuasion of national interest—a classical principle of
international relations (Hare, 2015). These early foundations provide a reference point to
understand diplomacy’s associations with modern-day agenda building and national
reputation building among others. Moreover, as this study examines how embassies and
ministries of external affairs operate in the social media context, it has essentially traced
the beginnings of these offices of public diplomacy here.
World War I Era

During the 18th century, France controlled most of Europe, but the region experienced multiple hostilities due to the French Revolutionary wars and Napoleon’s invasions. To bring stability to Europe, the four nations of Austria, Prussia, Russia, and Great Britain joined forces and defeated Napoleon. Later, these nations convened at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15 and pledged to combat the French hegemony so that a single nation alone does not control the European region again (Freeman & Marks, 2016). According to Martel (2007), the aim was to maintain a balance of power in order to maintain peace among European powers, which was the objective of diplomacy during this period.

The European powers continued to enter into multiple alliances to maintain the status quo. Diplomats who were chosen from the nobility rose in power and formulated policies at an international level with little opposition from the political elites (Rousseau, 2011). In this period, diplomacy was characterized by elitism, secrecy and bilateral agreements (Rousseau, 2011). Negotiations conducted behind closed doors and secret bilateral alliances against rival powers fostered an environment for the outset of World War I.

By the end of the 18th century, the ‘balance of power’ pact between the European nations had weakened. Britain and Germany were at the center of the power politics ready to replace France as a hegemon. Following its loss in the French-Prussian war in 1870, the French began to import their culture, language, and art to build a respectable image in the world (Hart, 2013). The German and the British followed the French as
national reputation building and cultural diplomacy got embedded into the diplomacy apparatuses (Hart, 2013). Many European nations established information offices world over and made efforts to build the national reputation to influence the U.S. citizens, especially before America entered the world war.

The United States also set up information and cultural centers. However, Nye (2004) stated that this was after most nations had advanced in the race for cultural hegemony. In 1917, President Woodrow Wilson set up the Committee on Public Information, also called as the Creel Committee, led by journalist George Creel. The aim was to counter German propaganda, garner domestic support for the war and convince citizens that the war was not for land but for U.S. ideas and values (Snow, 2003). Creel’s team comprised of propaganda expert Walter Lippman and public relations’ strategist Edward Bernays, who took decisions related to censorship. They used the entire propaganda machinery from posters, signboards, print, radio, motion pictures, telegraph and cable to speeches of President Wilson for diplomatic purposes. They also employed ‘Four-Minute-Men’, a group of 75,000 individuals, who spoke at social events on agendas of rationing, war bonds, victory gardens and rationalized the U.S. entry into the war. By the end of the war, the men had made more than 7.5 million speeches to 314 million people in 5,200 communities (Snow, 2003). The committee was disbanded after World War I.

A few scholars perceived World War I as a watershed moment for public diplomacy (Rousseau, 2011). Secret diplomacy was heavily criticized for the outbreak of World War I and a call for open diplomacy was made (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011).
Many leaders, particularly President Wilson believed that secret treaties based on secret diplomacy had been a primary cause of World War I. As a result, democratization became central to public diplomacy and instead of elite connections, merit determined diplomatic appointments (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2011). Moreover, with the advancements in transportation and communication technologies, Rousseau (2011) stated that presidents took diplomatic tours to foreign nations leading to a decreased dependence on the diplomat, who prior to World War I, was generally perceived as a cross agent—a factor that had contributed to the outbreak of the war.

Peace proposals, especially the Fourteen Points delivered by President Wilson in 1918 declared the end of World War I, heralding a new era of the influence of U.S. values on the art of public diplomacy. Theoretically speaking, open diplomacy replaced secret diplomacy as support for democratic values gained momentum (Rousseau, 2011). In the early 20th century, open diplomacy referred to negotiations between government officials, took place in the public domain. Citizens were mere spectators and were not involved in the negotiation process. With the advent of the new communication technologies, the definition of open diplomacy has changed to mean negotiations, which are open to the media and to the public scrutiny (Gilboa, 2000). Diplomacy practiced on social media is a form of open diplomacy as governments communicate with citizens and media elites, who involve in negotiations through instant two-way conversations and feedback on the policy-making process. The study examines these negotiations in the South Asian context through investigating the relationship between the agendas of the Indian government and the agendas the social media users.
World War II and Cold War

Diplomacy efforts in the U.S. began largely as a response to combat the German influence in Latin America. In 1936, the U.S. government incorporated public diplomacy into its foreign policy for the first time at the Buenos Aires Conference (Hart, 2013). The U.S. policymakers who perceived national reputation as a vital tool of the U.S. influence did not want to follow their European counterparts and engage in colonialism. As a result, Hart (2013) informed that the U.S. employed culture and education to build the national reputation in the minds of audiences, especially Latin Americans.

During the World War II, the radio played a major role in spreading a nation’s culture beyond its borders. Following the British, who had already established the British Broadcasting Service in the 1920s, the U.S. government started the Voice of America (VOA) in February 1942. It started to broadcast in four languages: English, German, Italian, and French. A year later, President Franklin Roosevelt established the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services and other agencies to provide the U.S. and foreign audiences with news of “the war, the U.S. war policies, and the activities and aims of the U.S. government” (Nakamura & Weed, 2009, p. 9).

The U.S. ‘propaganda’ disguised as public diplomacy continued to spread during the Cold War, except that, the primary mission was to combat Soviet propaganda and stop the spread of communism. The United States Information Agency (USIA) supplied television sets, along with U.S. television shows to foreign citizens in allied states (Cull, 2013). During the Cold War, U.S. propaganda strategies, at times, contradicted the founding principles of the U.S. Constitution (Hart, 2003). For instance, the U.S.
established libraries to forward ideas and values of education and freedom of speech. However, to curb the Communist influence, Senator Joseph McCarthy imprisoned U.S. authors who supported and advocated Russian ideologies. Many libraries burned books—an act that did not go well with foreign audiences, who viewed the U.S. as the baton of free speech.

**The 21st Century Diplomacy**

During this period, the U.S. public diplomacy, which largely stressed on the top-down communication of its policies, began to shift towards a citizen-centric approach. According to Cull (2013), the U.S. diplomats concentrated on public engagement through two-way conversations, which were facilitated via new communication technologies. By 1999, the USIA was abolished as part of a post-Cold War reorganization with public diplomacy responsibilities folded into the State Department.

Using the Internet for connecting with the citizens became a significant aspect of the U.S. public diplomacy after the 9/11 attacks. Cull (2013) narrated that under the leadership of Colin Powell, the U.S. diplomats were given mobile phones and all U.S. embassies started their websites. However, digitalization was limited to only the office infrastructure and the Internet was used to facilitate attendance at press conferences and ‘push’ information through sharing press releases and other documents via the websites (Cull, 2013). As a result, advocacy still ruled the U.S. public diplomacy process.

The need to forge two-way relationships took shape with the Shared Values Initiative in 2001, when the United States Department of State partnered with the American Muslim Council with an aim to build the national reputation in the Middle-
East. A website called [www.opendialogue.com](http://www.opendialogue.com) was set up where reputation was built through American Muslims, and later Muslims world over, sharing their stories about the adoption of the American culture and values. Cull (2013) pointed that although the program showed signs of listening and engaging, it soon died because of lack of funds and budget, which were now directed to the establishment of a broadcasting network in Arabic called *Al-Hurrah*. The strategy was to counter the influence of *Al-Jazeera*, the Qatari-government owned network. However, Cull (2013) noted that given to the one-way flow of information characteristic of a broadcasting network, *Al-Hurrah* was perceived a propaganda tool of the Bush government.

By 2008, social media was commended for being the force behind Obama’s win in the presidential elections. It was during this time that the U.S. public diplomacy office realized the importance of social media. Twitter and Facebook accounts were set up for all U.S. embassies and also the State Department. James Glassman, the undersecretary during this time, is credited with introducing U.S. public diplomacy to digital media (Cull, 2013). Other social media such as Second Life, YouTube were used as diplomatic tools to build the national reputation in the Arab world. By the end of 2011, the U.S. officials had set good examples in public diplomacy through their use of social media. For instance, diplomat Robert Ford used Facebook to connect with citizens in Syria, much to the chagrin of the Syrian government, whereas ambassador Michael McFaul used YouTube to talk directly with citizens during his trip to Russia.
Public Diplomacy in the Asia

Public diplomacy as a means to build national reputation was perceived as an essential foreign policy tool in many Asian countries recently (Hall, 2012). In Asia, China pioneered the use of public diplomacy to build the national reputation in the international arena following which Japan (2004), Malaysia (2006), and India (2006) established special divisions within their ministry of external affairs to formulate novel public diplomacy programs (Hall, 2012). Based on the models of the British Council and the Maison Française, China established several ‘Confucius’ institutes to spread its culture and is also investing funds in educational exchange programs. Likewise, Japan started the Japan Foundation including the Center for Global Partnerships to boost its student and cultural exchange programs (Hall, 2012).

The historical context and the successes and failures of the public diplomacy programs of the Western countries, such as those mentioned in the earlier sections of this chapter, provide examples for a few Asian nations to follow. For instance, India has set up the Public Diplomacy Division within the Ministry of External Affairs that functions the same as the United States Digital Outreach Team. The division runs India’s diplomacy missions and embassies on different new media and social media platforms. Also, following the U.S. example, Indian embassies, along with many cabinet ministries in the Indian government, were ordered to set up social media accounts (Suri, 2011). As comparisons can be made between the use of social media tools for diplomacy in the U.S. and India’s adoption of these tools, this study has reviewed the role of technology in U.S.
public diplomacy. The role of technology in the case of India’s mediated public diplomacy is examined in Chapter 3.

**Perspectives on Public Diplomacy**

**Traditional diplomacy versus public diplomacy.** Traditionally, diplomacy has been a secretive affair, in which, foreign policy decisions were made behind closed doors. Governments, politicians, and diplomats met face-to-face to talk, negotiate and persuade their counterparts on policies, which were later communicated to the public, both domestic and international. On the contrary, public diplomacy involves engagement of the public in the policy decision-making process as well as building long-term relationships with them. According to Entman (2008), the aim is to persuade the foreign audience to accept a nation’s policies as favorable and to build the national reputation.

Traditional diplomacy is characterized by advocacy, where governments merely ‘push’ information and convey their decisions to the foreign audiences. In contrast, public diplomacy involves “listening (engagement with foreign public through listening to their views, ideas and opinions and shaping one’s policies through what is learned), cultural diplomacy (engagement through spread of one’s language, culture, art), exchange diplomacy (engagement by getting domestic audience in direct contact with foreign audience through educational exchange programs) and broadcasting (engagement through news dissemination) (Cull, 2013, p. 125). These principles are relevant to this study because it involves the examination of engagement of social media users in South Asia with the Indian government accounts on social media.
The levels of communication differentiate traditional diplomacy from public diplomacy. Melissen (2005) argued that although in traditional diplomacy, political elites communicate the interests and ideas of their nations; in public diplomacy, they go a step further to engage foreign elites and citizens in a dialogue where persuasion is on a liberal information-sharing platform. Additionally, credibility or the attractiveness towards a nation separates traditional diplomacy, conceptualized as propaganda, from public diplomacy (Cull, 2013). According to Cull (2013), the ideas and values communicated through public diplomacy are perceived as legitimate, due to which public diplomacy is perceived as a cooperative, rather than a coercive, exchange and interaction between a government and foreign citizens.

Along with national values and culture, emotions are vital in public diplomacy because they bind nations in the international political arena (Graham, 2014). Emotions get activated during dialogue, persuasion, and rationality, especially during discourses related to values. Graham (2014) argued that values are essential to give credibility to the ideas and policies that nations aim to forward to foreign audiences. Furthermore, culture and emotions are related because understanding culture helps to build identities and social values (Graham, 2014). Because these aspects are important in the process of public diplomacy to build long-term relationships, Graham (2014) has strongly advocated for reinstating emotions in the study of public diplomacy (Graham, 2014). This study considers the proposition that Graham (2014) puts forth by measuring the likes, shares, favorites on tweets and Facebook status updates, which the Indian government accounts
publish on social media. Moreover, in examining the perceptions of social media users, the study also measures their emotional attractiveness towards India.

**Public relations.** A few scholars argued that public diplomacy and public relations are same as both involve persuasion of foreign audiences (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992; Van Dyke & Vercic, 2009). Among communication scholars, Signitzer and Coombs (1992) were among the first to inquire into the conceptual convergences between public diplomacy and public relations. They stated that ideas and concepts bind public diplomacy and public relations together.

On the contrary, Nye (2008) stated that public diplomacy is more than public relations because along with conveying information and selling a positive image, it also involves building long-term relationships that create an enabling environment for government policies. Melissen (2005) pointed out that diplomats and political elites, particularly in the United States incorporate techniques and strategies from corporates, public relations (PR) practitioners and marketing executives. With marketing and PR strategies guiding diplomats in their public diplomacy function, it becomes imperative to understand how these fields inform mediated public diplomacy. One approach is to incorporate the reputation building model from the field of marketing communication in its examination of mediated public diplomacy of India, which this study does.

**Soft power.** Nye (2008), who proposed the concept of soft power in 1990, stated, “Soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment (p. 94)”. He argued that a nation needed to be strategic in its use of power and combine both hard and soft power resources. For Nye
(2008), the ideal way to attract foreign public is through the dissemination of cultural artefacts such as literature, films, language and by making an ideological appeal to assimilate it. He further stated that soft power helped the U.S. to win the Cold War. As a result, Nye (2008) argued that the U.S., in its war against transnational terrorism, should consider soft power to win over the “hearts and minds” of individuals.

On the contrary, soft power has been asserted as not ‘soft’ but a delusional notion. Mattern (2007) asserted that any piece of art for cultural attraction has a ‘representational force’ behind it. Although this force is non-physical, it is still a form of coercive power, which is responsible for national reputation. Further, Mattern (2007) argued that representational force is a form of power that operates through the structure of a speaker’s narrative representation of reality. To achieve positive results, one indulges in verbal fighting or arguments via the representational force for effective persuasion. This is common in today’s world politics to create the so-called ‘attraction’. Therefore, Mattern (2007) believed that soft power is ironically rooted in hard power and that attraction created by this ‘force’ is sociolinguistic rather than physical, but has an element of coercion.

**Power relations.** Castells (2013) defined power as “the relational capacity to impose an actor’s will over another actor’s will on the basis of the structural capacity of domination embedded in the institutions of society” (p. 44). Pouliot (2016) argued that diplomacy, which is based on the principle of equality, stratifies nations to create power hierarchy. For instance, after the WWII, there was a void of power in world politics, which the U.S. desired to fill. It wanted to achieve pre-eminence without following the
strategies of war and conflict that colonial powers had adhered to. Because the U.S. stood for ideas of freedom and liberty, it decided to control the world through the spread of ideas representative of the nation. Hence, the plan was to spread democracy, capitalism and the U.S. way of living. As Hart (2013) stated, the U.S. had found a way to “rule without managing and to manage without ruling”. Melissen (2005) argued that soft power is a form of imperialism. This new imperialism does not desire to rule permanently over foreign countries, but only aspires for an indirect and informal empire. Van Ham (2005) argued that such imperialism may threaten, coerce and at times even invade, but it does so with the claim to improve (that is, democratize) foreign countries and then leave.

Among the South Asia examined here, India is perceived as a hegemon. Its power is by the virtue of large population, economic development and technological development among other factors. However, the same power is perceived weak against the Chinese economic might and global reputation. India often competes with its neighbor China for the position of the most influential nation in the Asian region. It does this by providing economic aid, signing bilateral treaties, and building infrastructural projects to South Asian nations. In this study, these agendas are investigated to examine the mediated public diplomacy of India on social media in South Asia.

**Social media diplomacy.** While government-to-government diplomacy is termed as traditional diplomacy and government-to-citizen diplomacy is termed as public diplomacy; government-to-citizen diplomacy using new media technologies, such as the Internet, is termed as new public diplomacy (Hayden, 2015; Pamment, 2013). This study
examines public diplomacy mediated through social media such as Facebook and Twitter to build agendas and the national reputation of India.

Scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy are yet to concur on a term to define public diplomacy conducted on social media (Gilboa, 2016). Social media diplomacy also called as digital diplomacy, is “conducted via digital-based platforms and tools including websites, blogs, social networks and smartphones” (Gilboa, 2016; p. 541). Scholars have often equated, contrasted and confused it with e-diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, virtual diplomacy, real-time diplomacy, networked diplomacy or social diplomacy (Gilboa, 2016). Social media, especially Twitter, have become popular channels for communication between politicians, foreign officials and the public, and among people. Hence, Lufkens (2016) has defined social media diplomacy as Twiplomacy. In this study, social media diplomacy is termed as mediated public diplomacy of India on social media.

A few scholars such as Pamment (2013) stated that as opposed to public diplomacy, which is characterized by a one-way flow of information and limited interaction between the communicator and the recipient, social media diplomacy establishes two-way engagement with the public. Likewise, Hayden (2015) pointed out that technology transforms public diplomacy from a tool of information dissemination into a mechanism for building and leveraging of long-lasting relationships with foreign publics.

Social media and crisis communication. Twitter has been extensively used as a tool for communication during crises such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks. The
Indian government has used Twitter to rescue citizens from war-torn countries such as Yemen, Libya, and Egypt. During the Yemen crisis, India rescued not only its own citizens but also citizens from 26 other nations (Tharoor, 2015). The pick-up locations and emergency contact information along with continuous updates on the rescue missions were tweeted to followers. Also, by providing live updates about a crisis situation, the social media sites such as Twitter complemented the traditional communication channels.

Social media, especially Twitter, is also an effective platform for building reputation. Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011) compared the effects of traditional and social media strategies on social media users’ perception of reputation in an online experiment. They found that crisis communication via Twitter leads to higher reputation than crisis communication via blogs, which in turn leads to higher reputation than crisis communication via traditional newspapers (Schultz, Utz & Göritz, 2011). In recent times, politicians, celebrities, and sportsmen have used social media to repair their image and build reputation. For instance, the president of the United States Donald Trump artfully used Twitter to develop a followers’ base during the 2016 elections. In the case of corporations and governments, social media provide the resources to polish information shared in the media boosting the process of reputation building. One example is the image restoration strategies that the company used after the BP oil spill that polluted the Gulf of Mexico. Despite these advantages, social media usage is accompanied with varied challenges that are presented in the following sub-section.

Challenges to social media diplomacy. Proponents of the information and communication technologies privilege social media with having the potential to shape the
future of diplomatic relationships and replace traditional diplomacy. However, scholars such as Golan and Yang (2013) argued that there is little evidence to support the proposition that diplomacy conducted using social media tools has overtaken traditional diplomacy. They supported their argument with the example of the Arab Spring when the governments in the rebel nations blocked social media and *Al Jazeera*, the Qatari-government funded network, was the only information source. *Al Jazeera*, not social media, defined and set agendas about the Arab Revolution for the rebels. Golan and Yang’s (2013) argument may hold true in case of a few Islamic nations that do not produce their independent media content, but it is still to be investigated in developing nations such as India. This study examines mediated public diplomacy on social media to address this gap in the literature.

A few scholars have argued that mediated public diplomacy on social media cannot operate in isolation. Melissen (2005) stated that public diplomacy is depended on a nation’s foreign policies. As a result, if the foreign policy fails to achieve its objectives, public diplomacy efforts also yield counterproductive outcomes. Taking this argument forward, Owen (2015) stated that given this dependency, digital diplomatic efforts should not be considered a failure, but a reflection of unappealing foreign policy. He illustrated this point citing conclusions of the United States Digital Outreach Team—formed to build the national reputation for the U.S. in the Middle East after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He argued that diplomacy through tweets failed to positively influence Egyptians during Obama’s Cairo speech because of a negative U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. Moreover, Owen (2015), who is critical of Canada’s decision to
cut traditional diplomatic ties with Iran, cautions that Canada’s social media diplomacy efforts towards Iran are likely to fail because Canada’s foreign policy does not align with Iran’s interests. Iranians are aware of Canada’s opposition to the nuclear pact with the U.S. but perceive the deal as yielding high economic returns. Owen (2015) stated that social media diplomacy “has to play in the game that is being played (by traditional diplomacy)” (p. 167). In the case of Canada, Owen (2015) concluded that with no government-to-government diplomacy and a social media diplomacy destined to fail, Canada had stretched beyond the boundaries of public diplomacy. From the arguments above, it follows that scholars critical of mediated public diplomacy on social media diplomacy should evaluate its success, not in isolation, but in reference to the nation’s foreign policies.

Other criticisms of mediated public diplomacy on social media are associated with the lack of strategic communication skills of diplomatic actors (Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015) and lacuna in communication between policymakers and foreign public (Manor, 2015). Scholars such as Kampf, Manor, and Segev (2015) analyzed Twitter and Facebook accounts of 11 foreign ministries and concluded that political elites underutilize the potentials of mediated public diplomacy because they lack the skills to initiate and engage in two-way communication on social media. They ‘push’ information on a limited number of agendas by publishing press releases, which mainly target foreign citizens. Moreover, as domestic audience fail to receive credible messages targeted to them, they refuse to advocate national interests through retweets or shares. Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015) propagated that governments need to formulate guidelines and
train diplomats in engagement skills needed for the success of mediated public diplomacy on social media. In a similar study conducted a year later, Manor (2015) found that foreign ministries are engaged in dialogue with foreign elites instead of foreign citizens. Moreover, foreign ministries act as gatekeepers and rarely communicate the agendas of the foreign audiences to policymakers—providing little opportunity to foreign citizens to influence the foreign policy decisions and politicians to align national policies as per citizens’ interests. The lack of a reciprocal relationship between the national elites and the foreign citizens is likely to result in the failure of mediated public diplomacy efforts on social media.

Does mediated public diplomacy on social media play along with the foreign policy of India towards South Asia? This study investigates the proposition through an examination of India’s agenda building on social media in South Asia. Before investigating this proposition, the study examines India’s public diplomacy and its relationships with South Asian neighbors in the next chapter. The agendas that India builds in these South Asian nations are also enumerated in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3: Public Diplomacy of India and the South Asian Region

While the previous chapter examined the public diplomacy practices in the Western countries, this chapter specifically focuses on the public diplomacy of India in South Asia. It traces the development of India’s public diplomacy from the pre-Mughal era to the post-colonial period. The chapter also investigates the development of India’s public diplomacy on social media. India’s relationships with its South Asian neighbors are discussed in detail.

Indian Diplomacy

Pre-Mughal period. Prior to the arrival of the Mughals in the 14th century, the Indian region was ruled by many Hindu kings who were constantly at war with each other. As a result, most of their foreign affairs were limited to kingdoms within the South Asian region. These kings governed on the principles in the ancient texts such as the Vedas, Smritis, Upanishads, and Puranas. These texts written by ancient scholars were commentaries on governance, society, philosophy and law (Singh, 2016). For instance, sections of the Smritis were on matters about inter-state relations and diplomacy. One such section called the manusmriti advises to befriend the enemy of a hostile neighbor through neutrality and mediation. Additionally, the manusmriti also emphasizes that a king must choose an ambassador who is “loyal, honest, skillful, possessing good memory, fearless and eloquent” because the existence of a state depends on his faculty to read other’s thoughts and feelings (Singh, 2016, para. 7).

Another document, Arthashastra, written by Kautilya or Chanakya, is a treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy. On diplomacy, the document states
the rules to follow during diplomatic missions, advises on the use code language for diplomatic correspondence, and also discusses the ranks of ambassadors, their qualifications, status, immunity, duties, salaries (Singh, 2016). One of the doctrines in *Arthashastra* states:

For the purpose of settlement of disputes, four methods should be advocated, namely, *sama, dana, bheda*, and *danda*. *Sama* (conciliatory approach) should be the first step in tackling a dispute or problem, followed by appeasement (*dana*); when this fails then the effort to create division and drive a wedge between the opponents (*bheda*) is prescribed. The use of force (*danda*) is to be employed as the last resort when all other methods fail (Singh, 2016).

During the Mauryan empire, diplomatic missions were dispatched to spread Buddhism and politically influence Southeast Asia. An outcome of these missions is the prevalence of Buddhism and its influence on the cultures of present day Southeast Asian nations of Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos. Also, during the reign of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka, many envoys from the Macedonian-ruled kingdoms visited the region. At the same time, Ashoka dispatched numerous missions of his own to West, Central, and Southeast Asia (Freeman & Marks, 2016). However, with the fall of the Mauryan empire, the diplomatic missions extinct. In South India, the Chola and the Dravidian kings continued diplomatic and cultural exchanges with Southeast Asia and China (Freeman & Marks, 2016). However, after the Mughals and British invaded the region, India’s diplomatic strategies and early traditions were replaced by those of its new rulers.
**Mughal and the British periods.** The Mughal empire consisting of modern day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and parts of Afghanistan was founded in 1526. Only the first two Mughal emperors, Babur and his son Humayun, were Central Asian Turks. Their successors were born out of marriage alliances with Hindu Rajput or Persian princesses (Collier, 2016). During the 300-year-old Mughal empire, Islam had assimilated into the region with many Hindus either embracing the religion or adopting its traditions. Many Hindu artistes and musicians received patronage at the Mughal courts. Hindus were given high ranks in the Mughal administration and also commanded the Mughal army. Collier (2016) stated that the Mughal culture influenced the food, clothing and language of the Hindus forming a new culture existent in the present day North India.

The foreign relations of the Mughals were restricted to Safavids in the Persia region and the Uzbek in Central Asia—the two neighboring empires. The Ottoman empire was also of interest to the Mughals because of the Ottoman’s close relationship with the Safavids and the Uzbek. It was expected that the Mughals who propagated Sunni Islam along with the Ottomans and the Uzbek would fight against the Safavids because they followed Shia Islam. Instead, Farooqi (2004) stated that the Mughal diplomacy was governed by the geopolitical realities of that time instead of religious proximity. Their diplomacy was determined by the need to defend the empire’s territorial and national interests. Therefore, their foreign policies supported the Safavids to control the growing power of the Uzbek. India employs this type of balance of power strategy against Pakistan by supporting Afghanistan through development projects and financial aid.
The British arrived in India in the early 17th century while the region was still ruled by the Mughals. The British traders spent their early years in establishing diplomatic ties with the Mughal kings and fighting with the established Portuguese and Dutch traders to gain control over the Indian ocean. It was not until the 19th century that the British completely defeated the wealthy and powerful Mughal empire to gain control over the Indian region. When the British gained power, the Indians had formed their own identity distinct from their colonizers. By 1857, Indians had started to regroup and connect directly with foreign actors to gain support for their independence from the British (Keenleyside, 1987). Indian nationalist propaganda centers were established with the support of the Indian diaspora in Germany, France, Japan and the U.S. (Keenleyside, 1987). The foreign trips that the Indian leaders took helped them establish connections with leaders fighting against imperialism in their own nations. Thus, Keenleyside (1987) stated that under the British rule, Indians gained vital lessons in diplomacy that prepared them to establish strong foreign relations and define their foreign policies post-independence.

Post-independence era (after 1947). The British colonial rule and the independence struggle shaped the attitudes of Indian leaders and their policies towards foreign nations. The leaders could not perceive of any further domination and enslavement of India by any external forces. Therefore, even today, the Indian foreign policy is strongly governed by preserving the nation’s self-interest of maintaining territorial integrity and autonomy in foreign policy (Hardgrave & Kochanek, 2008). The first prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, who also served as a foreign minister in
his government, declared the objectives of India’s foreign policy at Columbia University in 1949. In his speech, Nehru said:

Inevitably she (India) had to consider her foreign policy in terms of enlightened self-interest, but at the same time she brought to it a touch of her idealism. Thus, she has tried to combine idealism with national interest. The main objectives of that policy are: the pursuit of peace, not through the alignment with any major power or group of powers, but through an independent approach to each controversial or disputed issue; the liberation of subject peoples; the maintenance of freedom both national and individual; the elimination of want, disease, ignorance, which afflict the greater part of the world’s population (Hardgrave & Kochanek, 2008, p. 475).

During the Cold War period, India opted out of the power politics and adhered to the principle of nonalignment. Nehru perceived that an independent nation needed rapid economic growth and poverty mitigation which was possible only through maintaining external peace (Hardgrave & Kochanek, 2008). This ideology reflects in India’s policies as it continues to seek a peaceful periphery and works for harmonious neighborly relations in her extended neighborhood. The foundations of Indian foreign policy that Nehru laid received consensus at all domestic levels of Indian politics (Hardgrave & Kochanek, 2008). As a result, successive governments have continued to adhere to it.

“After independence, India invested considerable resources in high-level dialogues, intellectual and cultural exchanges, and conferences of concerned parties, seeking to influence peoples as well as governments by using open diplomacy and moral
persuasion” (Hall, 2010, p. 1090). In 2006, as part of the Ministry of External Affairs, the Public Diplomacy Division was set up to promote the understanding of India’s foreign policies.

In 2011, the then joint secretary (Public Diplomacy) in the Ministry of External Affairs, Navdeep Suri wrote an article in the Strategic Analysis journal revealing India’s diplomatic agenda. He wrote that the division would focus on broadening the foreign visitors’ programs. The itinerary of diplomats, delegates, ambassadors, film critics and journalists would include a display of Indian democracy and commerce (Suri, 2011). Another focus was to project India’s soft power through movies and culture. Likewise, the division also planned to promote the development partnerships through which India provides millions of dollars in credit lines to foreign nations.

**Indian diplomacy on social media.** In 2009, a few ministers of the then ruling Congress party ushered in the era of deployment of social media for diplomatic purposes into the Indian administration. While many ministers had accounts on social media, those who attracted a large following talked personally with the citizens instead of letting their aides manage their accounts (Dugan, 2010). In particular, the pioneers were the then minister of external affairs Shashi Tharoor and the then foreign secretary Nirupama Rao.

Tharoor had worked at the United Nations and after his international diplomatic experience, he wanted to change the “traditional, bureaucratic and rather stuffy way of doing politics in India” (Buncombe, 2010, para. 6). As a minister of external affairs, he would tweet about his political activities from his personal phone because the Indian government had prohibited the use of government computers from accessing social
media. Tharoor would provide live updates and news about his trips abroad, including a visit to Haiti in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake to his 70,000 followers. However, Tharoor’s tweets which were critical of the policies, media and, at times, his own political party, caused numerous controversies resulting in his resignation.

Desai (2017) states that the Indian government and the media were not accustomed to a minister bypassing them to communicate directly with the public. Despite his failure as a minister, Tharoor had set an example for the Indian leaders. He had demonstrated that using social media was a platform to reach out to “a new, young, educated category of Indians who might not normally bother with politics” (Buncombe, 2010, para 7).

Tharoor was successful in changing the attitude of the Indian government towards social media. It was during his tenure that the Public Diplomacy Division entered the social media sphere starting the account called Indian Diplomacy (@Indiandiplomacy) on Twitter on July 8, 2010. The objective was to assist the Indian embassies in projecting India’s image effectively (Swarup, 2016). The official accounts of the Public Diplomacy Division were soon started on other social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Blogger. Tharoor advocated that India should adopt a diplomatic style similar to the United States —actively using social media to give live updates about diplomatic visits and meetings on varied social media platforms (Bhasin, 2010). He argued that although there was a weak link between India’s soft power and national security, the relation did not undermine India’s strategy to further its national interests. However, India needed to
pay attention to credibility and strengthen its soft power through an emphasis on pluralism (Bhasin, 2010).

Social media diplomacy was employed to assist during a crisis in 2011 when the Indian foreign secretary Nirupama Rao used Twitter to evacuate Indians from Libya and Egypt after protests began in these countries. She would respond instantly to those who tweeted her for help and gave them instructions on how to move out of the crisis-hit nations. Rao’s strategy of sending instant replies to queries about India’s foreign policy was “a prospect virtually unheard of in India’s byzantine bureaucracy” (Desai, 2017, para. 9). Like Tharoor, Rao personalized her tweets which were mainly updates of her daily meetings that she embedded with images. Through Rao, the Indian politicians learned how social media, especially Twitter can be used to fill the communication voids that arise during the time of crisis (Desai, 2017). Later, Sushma Swaraj who became the minister of external affairs during the Modi government adopted Rao’s social media strategies.

During Rao’s tenure, the Indian government recognized the need for using social media for all its administrative activities. The proposition, however, raised issues related to who is authorized to speak on behalf of the government and to what extent should the social media accounts engage with the public (Pandey, 2013). To resolve these dilemmas and encourage agencies to use social media, the Indian government released an official draft of framework and guidelines which states that “the purpose behind the use of social media is not only to disseminate information but also to undertake public engagement for a meaningful public participation for the formulation of public policy” (Pandey, 2013,
para. 12). As per the framework, social media were to be employed to get citizen feedback, reiterate the government’s policies, interact on public agendas, build brand India and provide information on the government’s plans and strategies (Pandey, 2013). Following the government’s mandate, the Indian high commissions, embassies and consulates opened accounts on Twitter and Facebook. A sample of these accounts are examined in this study.

The general election of 2014 was a watershed moment in Indian politics with th election campaigning going largely digital. Specifically, of all the candidates, Narendra Modi’s social media strategies garnered support from millions of Indian youth. Modi incorporated the actions that Barack Obama employed during his 2008 and 2012 elections. Like Obama, Modi interacted live with citizens through social media campaigns that were promoted using catchy slogans. He invited voters for his campaign rallies using WhatsApp messages; and broadcast his speeches on a YouTube channel. He also ran pages such as ‘I support Narendra Modi’ that generated eight million likes on Twitter and 12 million on Facebook. The effectiveness of his branding techniques was evident in the fact that he became the second most followed politician in the world on Twitter even before he won the elections.

After becoming the prime minister, Modi’s branding techniques on social media involuntarily became India’s social media diplomacy practices. Social media pages were started for campaigns such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Digital India and Make in India that the Modi government initiated. Updates about the 20 foreign tours that he took immediately becoming the prime minister to big allied nations such as Japan and China
and small nations such as Mongolia and Sri Lanka were promoted with hashtags such as ModiInChina and ModiInLanka. “Through usage of social media as a tool, the PM has projected himself as accessible for fruitful interaction, making his initiatives public through his tweets” (Sharma, n.d, p. 112). Modi’s promotional tactics on social media, including his conventional selfies with world leaders during his diplomatic tours, have laid down a novel role that the future Indian heads of the state will need to perform.

Using social media, particularly Twitter, as a complaint box and give a personal face to India’s diplomatic actions is the current minister of external affairs Sushma Swaraj. Called as the ‘Supermom of the State’ by The Washington Post, Swaraj has earned a reputation for using Twitter to resolve political crisis and small bureaucratic agendas that social media users face. Thus, her government-to-people diplomatic approach largely includes the use of Twitter for the recusing Indian Indians from Saudi Arabia and Yemen or helping a woman get a visa to join her husband on the couple’s honeymoon. Following the success of Swaraj, the Indian government got its 200 Twitter accounts under one umbrella called #TwitterSeva to quickly redress queries of social media users. The application of social media by Swaraj and other Indian politicians to carry out bilateral and diplomatic tasks has put India ahead of many nations in the use of social media for diplomacy. As stated in Chapter 1, Diplomacy Live, a global research and consulting firm, ranks India seventh out of 210 nations in digital diplomacy rankings for 2016.

At present, India has 166 missions and embassies on Twitter and 172 on Facebook which have been verified under the ‘India in’ label (Swarup, 2016). As a result,
the accounts studied in this study have names such as India in Afghanistan, India in Bhutan, and India in Bangladesh among others. Using innovative videos, graphics and contests, many of these accounts have attracted more than two million followers. A key component of making the content attractive is using dedicated handles/accounts for events (Pravasi Divas and Make in India) and using videos with traditional formats like the press conferences (Swarup, 2016). The short explainer videos to project India’s history and culture and the live video formats on Facebook and YouTube engage many followers. For instance, the news of a surgical strike on terror camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir on Facebook Live garnered 1.9 million views, reaching 11 million users (Swarup, 2016). Additionally, to project itself on social media the Ministry of External Affairs choses themes that builds the image of India.

In 2014, the focus was on Indian elections, the role of Indians in World War I, advancements in space technology and focus on the north-eastern region as part of the Look East policy. Similarly, in 2015, the agendas highlighted were women empowerment, flagship initiatives such as Make in India, Digital India, Clean Ganga and Smart Cities, prominence of yoga, maritime trade routes, Act Easy Policy and a focus on SAARC history of the past 30 years (Sharma, 2014).

Despite the success of India leaders in employing social media for diplomatic purposes, Natarajan (2014) argues that Indian diplomacy still lacks in constructing a strategic narrative for India and counter radical narratives that are spread online. Additionally, when compared to the United States or China, India’s ministry of external affairs is underdeveloped and lacks manpower and funds (Ogden, 2014). The limited
ingenuity gives priority only to economic and social issues thereby neglecting military power. Ogden (2014) opines that a rigid structure in the selection of ambassadors that also prohibits statecraft specialists from taking up diplomatic positions limiting India’s ambitions to become a superpower.

**Indian High Commissions and Indian Embassies**

The study examines Twitter and Facebook accounts of Indian high commissions and Indian embassies. Both a high commission and an embassy are diplomatic missions representing their country in another country. Both perform the same functions. An embassy is a diplomatic mission of a country sent to a non-Commonwealth country whereas a high commission is a diplomatic mission of a Commonwealth country sent to another Commonwealth country. An embassy is headed by an ambassador whereas the head of a high commission is called a high commissioner. Thus, India has high commissions in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and embassies in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, and Nepal.
This study considers countries located in the South Asian region (see Figure 1). The rationale for selecting the nations in this region is the South Asian Association for Regional Corporation (SAARC). Bangladesh, Bhutan Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, along with India are the founding members of SAARC. Afghanistan joined the association in 2007. The founding members agreed to form a trade bloc in 1985 to promote trust and cooperation among South Asians.
SAARC is based on the “consciousness that in an increasingly interdependent world, the objectives of peace, freedom, social justice and economic prosperity are best achieved in the South Asian region by fostering mutual understanding, good neighborly relations and meaningful cooperation among the member states which are bound by the ties of history” (Goel, 2004, p. 1). The SAARC nations cooperate in the areas of agriculture; education, culture, and sports; health, population, and child welfare; the environment and meteorology; rural development, tourism; transport; science and technology; communications; women in development; and the prevention of drug trafficking and drug abuse.

Overall, analysts state that SAARC is a failure because of the geographical, political, and religious differences. The Indian territory alone equals a combined area of the rest of the SAARC nations. Moreover, India’s population, GDP, foreign exchange, gold reserves and armed forces are more than the combined assets of the other nations (V. Kumar, 2011) The resource and power imbalances has created fear and insecurity among the small nations.

SAARC was formed to improve trade relations in South Asia, but Jayaram (2016) states the low level of regional connectivity and the lack of border infrastructure has hampered the smooth flow of goods. Another geographic issue is the border dispute and the conventional conflicts of the member nations with India. Except for Afghanistan, India shares land and maritime boundaries with all SAARC members and has border issues with Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
SAARC was formed to build peace and trust among member nations, but has failed to achieve this objective. The two vital members, India and Pakistan, define their relationship on the historical Partition that killed a million people. Their border issues and conflict over Kashmir have turned into unresolvable disputes and are also the main reasons for polarization on development projects for the SAARC region (V. Kumar, 2011). SAARC nations have different political systems that creates asymmetry in political dealings. As a hegemonic power, India enforces democratic ideology that creates insecurity and distrust among small nations.

**India’s Relationship with its Neighbors**

In 1991, one of the policies that India formulated to improve relations with Southeast Asian countries was the Look East Policy. The former prime minister Manmohan Singh (2004-2014) pursued the policy and the current government led by Narendra Modi (2014-present) also follows a similar strategy called as the neighborhood first approach. The tweets and Facebook status updates that this study examines are the agendas that India built during the periods of the previous and the current administrations.

The Look East Policy was formulated to facilitate economic and strategic relations with the eastern neighbors, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) which includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam along with Australia, New Zealand, South Korean and Japan. Under the policy, trade, economic, and defense ties along with air links, tourism, and people-to-people ties developed dramatically (Sundaram, 2013).
The ASEAN region is India’s largest trade partner ahead of Europe and the United States, and an increasingly important source of foreign direct investment into India. However, Sundaram (2013) points out that China still remains the largest trading partner of the region. As a result, the second objective of the Look East Policy was to counter the strategic influence of China in the region (Sundaram, 2013). Although economic cooperation between India and China is growing, the strategic competition and rivalry between the two is also sharpening. Sundaram (2013) argues that India feels more and more threatened by China and has drastically changed its regional strategy with the aim to better consolidate its own regional alliances.

On the same lines of the Look East Policy, the current government under the leadership of prime minister Narendra Modi pursues the neighborhood first policy. Under this, Modi focuses on India’s immediate neighbors, especially the SAARC nations. In his oath-taking ceremony as the head of the state, he invited heads of all the SAARC nations and then followed the event with diplomatic visits to these nations, except Maldives. Jaishankar (2016) explains that Modi intends to give political and diplomatic priority to India’s immediate neighbors and the Indian Ocean island states. Modi also plans to supply resources, equipment, and training to the neighboring nations. Additionally, he plans to improve regional connectivity to improve the free flow of goods, people, energy, capital, and information, and promote a model of India-led regionalism with which its neighbors are comfortable (Jaishankar, 2016). Overall, India believes that all its neighbors, big or small are crucial for its economic growth and stability (Nayak, 2014). However, analysts are critical of Indian leaders who usually take a hegemonic stand and
adopt the carrot and stick approach, especially with small nations, to build their foreign policy agendas. The following sections provide an overview of the policies, concerns, issues and agendas that India pursues independently with each SAARC nation.

**Afghanistan.** Placed strategically in Central Asia, Afghanistan is a bridge between the Middle East and East Asia. It is a landlocked nation bordered by Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China. Its geographic location is one of the main reasons the region has been subject to numerous invasions and political games between the British and Russians (pre-World War I), the United States and the Soviet Union (Cold War), and in recent times among China, India, Pakistan and Iran (Sultani, 2012). Although Afghanistan and India do not share an official boundary, the two nations share a 65-mile border stretch, which falls in the disputed region of Kashmir controlled by Pakistan.

After the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, India engaged significantly with Afghanistan at multiple levels and took an active role in the nation’s reconstruction (Pant, 2010). It reestablished its diplomatic ties converting its Liaison Office in Kabul into an embassy, which was closed for five years during the Taliban rule. This was soon followed with the establishment of consulates in four cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad. In 2005, India proposed Afghanistan's membership in the SAARC. Six years later, the two nations signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement that includes cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, science and technology, agriculture, mining, infrastructure, energy, education, sports and people to people relations (Gupta, 2011). Additionally, training Afghan police and armed forces to build
its military capacity for providing security is another major agenda included in the agreement.

India has economic interests in Afghanistan and to pursue these it makes huge investments and builds infrastructure in Afghanistan. It has invested $11 billion for development and humanitarian aid making it one of the largest donors of Afghanistan. In September 2016, it pledged another $1 billion for development projects (Nanda, 2016). Indian engineers aided Afghan workers in the construction of the Zaranj-Delaram road and the Chahbahar port to facilitate the movement of goods, and power grids for transmitting electricity from Uzbekistan to Kabul. Moreover, Afghanistan’s parliament building, and the India-Afghanistan Friendship Dam (Salma dam) was built with Indian monetary investment. Pant (2010) argues that India’s economic and infrastructural agendas in Afghanistan are to gain access to the Central Asian region which has oil and gas reserves that will meet the needs of an increasing Indian population.

A second major agenda that India pursues in Afghanistan is to counter the influence of Islamic extremists. Indian officials with assistance from Russia and Iran, provided medical assistance to the Northern Alliance which fought against the Taliban (Pant, 2010). A military base was also established in Tajikistan, close to the Afghan border, to provide military assistance to the Northern Alliance fighters and later to provide assistance to the post-Taliban government in Kabul (Pant, 2010). In pursuing these objectives, Khalid (2011) argues that India’s objective was to aid groups which are hostile towards Pakistan and Pakistani-supported mujahedeen groups. However, Pant (2010) states that the larger objective was to weaken mujahedeen groups such as
Lashkar-e-Taiba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen/Harkat-ul-Ansar which are trained in the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Pant, 2010). These groups are alleged to back violence in Kashmir as well as encourage insurgency that threatens India’s security and weakens its economy (Pant, 2010). At present, Hanauer and Chalk (2012) conclude that Delhi’s strategy is to seek “a stable, democratic, multi-ethnic Afghan government” (p.12) to prevent the return of the Taliban, and mitigate anti-India extremism.

Projecting itself as a global and regional power that is capable of maintaining stability in its neighborhood is another agenda that India intends to pursue through its policies in Afghanistan (Pant, 2010). A Rand Corporation report states that India’s Afghan policies are a practical extension of its long-term economic, regional and global interests in the South Asian region (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). For instance, the air force base in Tajikistan portrays India’s military power in South Asia (Hanauer and Chalk, 2012). Furthermore, India’s regional and global standing has elevated with the United States incorporating India’s assistance in restoring stability in Afghanistan (Pant, 2010). India supports the United States’ policy to ensure stability in Afghanistan in contrast to Pakistan which the White House perceives as a hindrance to its War on Terror policy (Pant, 2010). Thus, India’s interests require Afghanistan to maintain stability, regional integrity and economic growth as against Pakistan whose policy consists of supporting extremism in Afghanistan to pursue its rivalry with India (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). Hence, Hanauer and Chalk (2012) predict that in future Kabul’s leadership is likely to be more receptive to India’s interests than to the interests of its immediate neighbor, Pakistan.
A few scholars argued that through its policies, India aims to counter Pakistan’s influence over Afghanistan (Khalid, 2011; Pant, 2010). India and Pakistan competed strategically to influence Afghanistan – a contest which a few scholars call the ‘Great Game’, a term used to refer to a similar power rivalry between the British and Russian forces over Afghanistan and its surrounding regions in the late 19th century (Khalid, 2011). India portrays that Pakistan’s intelligence agency encourages terrorism and supports extremist groups in Afghanistan (Khalid, 2011). By portraying Pakistan as a sponsor of terror, Khalid (2011) stated that India aims to disturb the balance of power resulting in instability in the South Asian region.

Education and entertainment media seem to be emerging as effective instruments of India’s soft power in Afghanistan. For Afghan students, India is the most sought-after destination for higher education (Das, 2011). The Indian Council for Cultural Relations offers 3,365 scholarships to international students, out of which 1,000 are awarded to Afghan students—the largest designated for any country (Ariana News, 2016). An Al Jazeera report states that familiarity with the Indian culture and language, good relations between the governments, easy-to-obtain visas, and the use of English in the classroom are some of the main reasons Afghans like to study in India (Das, 2013). Afghan students who graduate with degrees from India work in high administrative positions (Das, 2013). One example is of former President Hamid Karzai, who is said to be favorable towards India’s policies because of his education in India (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012).

Entertainment media in the form of Bollywood films and Indian television shows have made inroads into the Afghan culture. Under the Taliban, music and television were
banned. However, when the regime ended, loud Bollywood music was played in the lanes of Kabul (Verma & Schaffer, 2010). Afghans prefer Bollywood movies over movies in other languages because of their familiarity with India’s national language, Hindi. Bollywood movies have spread Indian culture, traditions and values in Afghanistan. Afghans identify with Indian values such as respecting elders and collectivism, which are similar in both the cultures. A *Time* magazine report noted, “The impact of Bollywood was so ubiquitous that Afghan children were seen reenacting Hindu marriage rituals and prayers, while teenagers have taken to touching their elders’ feet in a very non-Afghan sign of respect.” Also, Bollywood films have led to Hindi gaining popularity among the Afghan youth. In an article in *The Express Tribune*, Kabir Khan, a famous film director stated that many Afghans learn to speak in Hindi by watching Bollywood movies.

Along with Bollywood films, Indian television soaps are also popular in Afghanistan. Private television networks in Afghanistan broadcast Indian television dramas translated in the local language. For instance, Baker (2008) states a soap opera called *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bhau Thi* had a viewership of 10 million (about one-third of the population), but after a few years, the government banned the show declaring it as immoral, anti-Islamic and a threat to Afghan culture after pressure from the Islamic clerics.

**Bangladesh.** Bangladesh shares borders with India and Myanmar (Burma), but Nepal, Bhutan, and China which are located close to Bangladesh do not share a border with it because the Indian north-eastern region consisting of seven states are located
between them. India is often referred to as the ‘big brother’ of Bangladesh because of India’s hegemonic attitude towards the nation (Kashem & Islam, 2016). Although India aided Bangladesh in its liberation war against Pakistan in 1971, India’s action is portrayed as an intended intervention to meet their own political goal of weakening Pakistan.

After the British rule ended, the sovereign states of India and Pakistan were formed based on the religious majority. The Bengal region was divided into East Bengal (Bangladesh) which joined Pakistan because of a large Bengali Muslim majority, and West Bengal (a Hindu majority) which joined India. Pakistan renamed East Bengal as East Pakistan and granted it a dominion status. This region not only differed from Pakistan on ethnic, linguistic and cultural aspects but even geographically the two were miles apart with the Indian territory in the middle.

In East Pakistan, most top administrative positions were occupied by West Pakistan elites who were frequently involved in the political and economic exploitation of the East. After the general elections of 1970, these military-elites refused to hand over power to the Awami League of East Pakistan, which had emerged as the single largest the victorious party (Haider, 2009). Consequently, demonstrations followed which the military-elites controlled with armed force. After millions of Bengalis entered India to escape the violence, the Indian military intervened, starting a nine-month liberation war against the Pakistan army. The war resulted in the separation of East Pakistan and the formation of a new state of Bangladesh. Haider (2009) argues that there are two schools of thought in Bangladesh: one believes that India’s intervention was out of a
humanitarian gesture to prevent genocide whereas the other view states that India intervened to fulfill its goal of emerging as an Asian superpower by weakening Pakistan and establishing a subservient state of Bangladesh.

Under its leader of independence and first President Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, Bangladesh signed the Twenty-Five Year Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with India to ensure that both the nations remained close allies (Singh, 2009). While he was in power, Bangladesh was also the highest recipient of aid from India. However, after his death in a military coup in 1975, the relationships between the two nations began to deteriorate (Singh, 2009). In this study, this political history is likely to inform attitudes of Bangladeshis towards India.

Over the years, the two nations have had numerous highs and lows in their bilateral relations. The relationship has largely suffered because of a porous border. The smuggling of cattle, food items, medicines, arms, and drugs is common, but specifically for India, the major concerns are illegal immigration and cross-border terrorism (Rather, 2013). In 2016, there were 20 million Bangladeshi immigrants in India and an estimate of 300,000 entered into India illegally every month (Jain, 2016; Rather, 2013). The locals contend that immigrants take their jobs and capture fertile lands (Rather, 2013). A second consequence has been the rising trans-border terrorism and insurgency that has led to security concerns. Bangladeshi leaders have been accused of encouraging extremist groups who support the insurgency and the separatist movement in the north-eastern states of India (Rather, 2013). The unstable political and economic situations have made it easy for terrorists to run their training camps in Bangladesh. On April 26, 2016,
militants killed 20 hostages in Bangladesh. This was followed by another attack near Dhaka in July 2016 that killed three people. These recent attacks are linked to homegrown terrorist groups affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The land border issue has existed since the colonial rulers did not clearly demarcate the 2,485-mile border between the two nations leaving more than 50,000 people living near the border enclaves without a nationality. These citizens were deprived of basic facilities of water, education, and healthcare for 70 years. Nonetheless, both the governments recently signed the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) under which the disputes on the enclaves were resolved. Although India lost territory under the agreement, it is likely that the gesture may lead to increase trade and promote stability and goodwill between the two nations along with improving India’s image in South Asia.

Disputes on the sharing of water from 54 rivers have been another main source of bitter relations (Majumdar, 2014). The inadequacy of water during the summer to meet the assessed demands in the two countries is the root cause of the conflict (Swain, 1993). Most of the rivers originate in India and flow downstream into Bangladesh. This allows India to control the flow of water and continue to expand its hegemony over its neighbor. On certain rivers, India has constructed barrages without the consultation of Bangladesh that obstructs the flow of water and silt (Malhotra, 2010). While navigation and irrigation have improved in the Indian territory, it has led to soil salinity, damage to fisheries and the displacement of people from the dry regions in the downstream regions (Swain, 1993). It has also reduced Bangladesh’s irrigation capacity. Furthermore, during the monsoon, India releases water from the dams resulting in manmade floods in many in
Bangladeshi villages (Swain, 1993). A recent bilateral treaty on the sharing of the Teesta River water fell through after the chief minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee refused to sign it going against the Modi government. Her decision was mainly to keep her voter constituency happy but is likely to influence the Modi government’s diplomatic efforts towards Bangladesh. This is also an example of how domestic politics influence a nation’s foreign policy.

In terms of trade relations and cooperation in the energy sector, Sobhan (2015) states that relations between the two nations have been good. India allows duty-free import of Bangladeshi products, but Sobhan (2015) points out that there is a large imbalance of trade because of tariffs and non-tariffs that India imposes on its neighbor. Overall, analysts state that India-Bangladesh relations are contingent on the domestic politics because mistrust and mutual suspicion is common between the two countries. For instance, Kashem and Islam (2016) observe that whenever the Congress has been at the center in India and the Awami League in Bangladesh, the two nations have shared a cooperative relationship resulting in the resolution of issues and signing numerous treaties such as the sharing the Ganges water for 30 years. On the contrary, when the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been in power in India, the relations have gone bitter. Previously, the BJP has frequently accused the Congress and the Bangladeshi leaders of encouraging illegal immigration to create a vote bank and straining the Indian economy respectively (Rather, 2013). However, under Modi’s leadership, the BJP has changed its approach.
India’s recent policy is to forward a model of development and cooperation in order to counter the growing Chinese influence on Bangladesh. In April 2017, India signed 22 agreements in the areas of defense, nuclear energy, cyber security, and media. It has offered $4.5 billion, which includes $500 million for Bangladesh to purchase defense equipment. The aim is to shift Bangladesh’s dependence on China for military technical support and counter the Chinese influence in South Asia.

**Bhutan.** Bhutan is a landlocked nation situated in the Himalayan mountain range. It lies between India and China (Tibet) acting as a buffer state between the two Asian powers (S. Kumar, 2011). Bhutan was never a British colony and was ruled by a monarch until 2008 when King Jigme Singye Wangchuck gave up power, not demanded by the people, to initiate the country’s transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy.

Diplomatic relations exist between India and Bhutan since India’s pre-independence era. British colonists in India first established political relations with Bhutan giving it a dominion status in 1865. Under this, Bhutan’s foreign affairs and defense were conducted in consultation with British India while allowing Bhutan to conduct its internal affairs without any interference. This policy continued under the 1949 Friendship Treaty which Bhutan signed with India after the British rule ended. However, in 2007, these clauses of this 57-year old treaty were updated allowing Bhutan to independently manage its foreign policy and military equipment. The clauses were substituted with cooperative terms where both nations agreed to protect the other’s territory from being used for activities harmful to national security and interests (Jain, 2017).
India contributes a large share in the development of Bhutan and is also the largest donor of its financial aid (Choden, 2004). Bhutan’s first two development plans (1961-66 and 1966-71) were financed by the Indian government (Choden, 2004). Moreover, from an economic perspective, the two nations share a free-trade regime. In 2015, Bhutan’s exports to India constituted 90% of its total exports. Bhutan largely exports electricity to India, which is produced at three hydro power plants set up by India. For defense purposes, Bhutan depends on Indian assistance. India trains the Royal Army of Bhutan and also supplies military equipment and clothing (S. Kumar, 2011). On the soft power front, it provides scholarships to Bhutanese students every year under the Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship and the ICCR Scholarship programs. It also builds schools, libraries, drinking water projects and community centers in Bhutan (Bisht, 2012; IANS, 2014). The two nations also share cultural and religious proximity. Choden (2004) state that the Indian saint Padmasambhava spread Buddhism which has become a way of life in Bhutan.

In the past, Bhutan’s dependence and relationship with India strengthened after the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950. Bhutan expected India’s help in defending its territorial sovereignty in case of a Chinese invasion. However, after India’s defeat in the Sino-India war of 1962, Bhutan started to doubt India’s ability to protect her (Stobdan, 2014). Moreover, India’s annexation of Sikkim threatened Bhutan’s autonomy (Stobdan, 2014). As a result, Bhutan began to expand its foreign relations without the consultation of India and its dependence on India reduced (Stobdan, 2014).
The reduced Indian influence paved the way for Chinese dominance—an issue which has become India’s main concern in Bhutan. With a sovereign authority over its foreign policy and an open economy, Bhutan established bilateral and trade relations with China, which irked New Delhi (Stobdan, 2014). China also began to pressurize Bhutan to allow it to establish a Chinese embassy in Thimpu. Bhutan was tempted with soft power initiatives such as a proposal to build world’s tallest Buddha statue in Bhutan. Moreover, in 2005, for the first time, China sent a cultural troupe to build stronger ties with Bhutan (Bisht, 2012). Likewise, to further counter India’s influence, China also aids Bhutan by exporting farming and telecommunication equipment to support Bhutan’s modernization process (Bisht, 2012).

Another major concern for India is the increasing Chinese territorial aggression in Bhutan. China has built roads close to Bhutan’s border towns and has also destroyed unmanned army posts in Bhutanese territory (Bisht, 2012). These incursions have kept the locals from accessing areas for medicinal herbs (Bisht, 2012). Furthermore, China claims considerable territory in central and northwestern Bhutan. It has offered to return it in exchange for a small area of the Chumbi Valley, which is close proximity to the Siliguri Corridor, one of India’s most strategic and sensitive territories (Saklani & Tortajada, 2016). If Bhutan accedes this area, it will give China a direct access to the Indian territory. Bhutan has delayed resolving the border issue with China to protect the Indian interests. In this regard, Stobdan (2014) argues that India’s policy of containing Bhutan by raising gas subsidies and influencing its election has strained the relationship.
**Maldives.** Maldives is an archipelagic nation, situated in the Indian Ocean. It lies southwest of India and Sri Lanka. Bhutan is one of the world’s most geographically disperse countries, and also the smallest Asian nation in terms of territory and population. India was the first country to open a diplomatic mission in the capital city of Malé in 1976.

Similar to Bhutan, India’s main concern in Maldives is its increasing closeness to China which engages Maldives largely through soft power initiatives that include infrastructure and developmental projects. China built the Maldivian Foreign Ministry building, a museum that houses the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, housing projects, roads and the drainage system Malé (Kumar, 2016). Moreover, the timely completion of the projects has enabled China to build reputation (Kumar, 2016). A growing Chinese presence in Maldives is a threat to India’s security because it gives China strategic control over the Indian Ocean and South Asia.

A recent issue that India encounters is the bilateral ties between Bhutan and Saudi Arabia, a nation alleged to promote Islamic extremism (Mukharji, 2017). Saudi Arabia is expected to be influential because it is a Sunni Muslim country like Maldives (Kumar, 2016). This threatens India’s agenda to ensure security and political stability in Maldives. India fears that Maldives proclivity towards extremism in the past coupled with the Saudi support is likely to turn the nation into a terror breeding hub (Mukharji, 2017). To counter this, in April 2016, India expanded its defense cooperation pact with Maldives.
Under the defense agenda that India pursues in Maldives, warships and aircraft are provided along with military equipment to help Maldives in maritime patrol and surveillance. Along with Sri Lanka, the two nations have been conducting training and joint combat exercises named Dosti since 1999 (Embassy of India in Male, 2015). In the past, India’s military assistance included the launched of ‘Operation Cactus’ consisting of 1,600 personnel dispatched to Maldives at the request of the former Maldivian president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom to foil a coup attempted by an extremist group (Kumar, 2016). Since 2009, at the request of the Maldivian government, India also stationed its navy in the region.

Educational and cultural ties between the two nations are strong. It was after 1960 that the relationship between the two nations strengthened when Maldivian students began to visit India for higher education under the Colombo Plan (Kumar, 2016). Under a treaty signed in 1999, the Maldivian government took Indian assistance in setting up distance education programs involving low investments (Mujtaba, 2005). In 2001, India trained Maldivian ministers in its institutions to assist the Maldivian economy. Moreover, India regularly sends teachers and sports coaches to Maldivian institutions (Mujtaba, 2005). Indian films, music and television serials are popular in Maldives and has helped spread the Indian culture in the region (Embassy of India in Male, 2015).

The Indian diaspora is a dominant group in the Maldivian region. Diaspora diplomacy is a powerful tool that governments use to pursue foreign policy objectives (Rana, 2009). The Indian expatriate community is the second largest with a strength of around 26,000. Moreover, Indians are mainly in high-level professions in Maldives such
as doctors, teachers, accountants, managers and engineers. Out of the 400 doctors, over 125 are Indians whereas around 25% of teachers in Maldives are Indians, who teach at middle and senior levels (Embassy of India in Male, 2015).

**Nepal.** Like Bhutan, Nepal is a landlocked nation and serves as a buffer state between China and India, the two nations with whom it shares its borders. Nepal is located in close proximity to Bangladesh and Bhutan but does not share a border with them because the Indian state of Sikkim is located in between them. During the British rule, Nepal signed a treaty with the British to remain a sovereign state. As a result, like Bhutan, it was never colonized.

India pursues its economic agenda in Nepal. It is the biggest donor of financial aid and the largest economic partner of Nepal. Under the trade agreement, India allows duty-free imports of Nepali goods. Moreover, after India opened its economy in the 1990s, many Indian multinationals invested in Nepal. At present, there are 150 Indian companies in Nepal engaged in manufacturing, services (banking, insurance, dry port, education, and telecom), the power sector and tourism industries. Shukla (2006) states that Indian businessmen also provide economic and technological assistance to Nepal.

A second agenda that India pursues is to ensure its national security. Nepal’s strategic location on the southern slopes of the Himalayas shields India from the increasing Chinese aggression in the region. With the Chinese annexation of Tibet in 1950, and later the Indo-Chinese wars along with the frequent border skirmishes have increased India’s security concerns. Moreover, China increased military presence, improved roads and deployed missiles on its border with Nepal near Tibet (Nayak, 2014).
Chinese presence in Nepal will give the superpower a military advantage over India. As a result, India expects Nepali politicians to consider its security concerns and limit the influence of external powers on their territory to diplomatic activities. However, Nepal frequently misinterprets India’s security agenda as an attack on Nepal’s sovereignty and independence (Nayak, 2014). Many Nepali politicians use this issue to portray India as a hegemon and a meddler in its internal politics.

To induce Nepali nationalism, King Mahendra started to build anti-India sentiments. His successor continued the hate rhetoric during the 1950s and 1960s. Nepal wanted to have a separate identity and distance itself from its numerous resemblances with India (Nayak, 2014). Furthermore, India, as an epitome of democracy, was perceived as a threat to the monarchy that also prompted the Nepalese rulers to have close ties with China (Nayak, 2014). Later, with the establishment of the multi-party democracy in Nepal, anti-India rhetoric continued with politicians using it to retain power and develop a vote bank. Politicians use the issues of the alleged border encroachments by India, poor treatment of Nepalese workers in India, and unresolved trade issues to further negative sentiments. Nayak (2014) argues that the negative sentiments have now percolated to the common man in Nepal and being anti-India is an indication of Nepali patriotism. Hence, the Indian reputation among Nepali citizens is likely to be negative.

The Nepali politicians also use the Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1950 to further anti-India sentiments is (Upreti, 2016). Under the agreement signed to protect the sovereignty of each other against a foreign power, India granted the same economic and educational opportunities to Nepalese as Indian citizens. They were allowed to work
in Indian government offices and own properties in India (Nayak, 2012). However, Nepali politicians did not allow such privileges to Indians and later portrayed the agreement as an Indian conspiracy to increase its influence in Nepal. Much of rhetoric was used for domestic political gains (Upreti, 2016). Despite the dissatisfaction, the treaty has not been revoked because of the popular demand, especially from the Madheshi community which shares close ties with India.

India micromanages and meddles with the internal Nepali politics through the Madheshis, who are mainly indigenous Indians. The Tarai region populated with Madheshis is regarded as a pro-Indian constituency in Nepal. In 2015, Nepal drafted a long-pending constitution, but marginalized groups, which included the Madheshis were denied equal representation. To protest the new constitution, the Madheshis blocked the entry of essential supplies from Indian into Nepal creating a shortage. However, Roy (2015) informs that the Indian government, which later denied the accusation, wanted Nepal to make certain amendments and called for a blockade when its demands were not accepted. In this manner, India instigates the Madheshis and politically divides and balkanizes Nepal.

Despite the differences and conflicts on both the sides, India-Nepal share an open border—a sign of trust and friendship (Nayak, 2014). The people-to-people ties are based on cultural and religious grounds. The Nepalese largely follow Hinduism and Buddhism, which are two prominent religions in India. Therefore, their values and traditions largely resemble India. Additionally, many Nepalese have family ties in India and also frequently travel to India for business.
**Pakistan.** Pakistan is located to the northwest of India. Along with sharing its border with India, it also shares its border with Afghanistan, China and Iran and a maritime border with Oman.

India-Pakistan shares a complex and an acrimonious relationship because of a historical past. When the colonial rule ended, British India was divided into two nations of Muslim majority Pakistan and Hindu majority India. To enable such a religious partition, millions had to move, leaving their property, land and belongings behind. This resulted in anger and violence among the displaced and ultimately riots which killed more than a million people (Kuszewska, 2016). The partition began a contentious relationship between India and Pakistan leading to three wars, multiple border skirmishes and a nuclear arms race.

The Kashmir issue, the legacy of the British partition plan, is the biggest agenda on the foreign policies of both the nations. As per the plan, the Muslim majority regions were to join Pakistan. The Kashmir Maharaja, who was a Hindu, wanted to remain independent, but the Muslim majority wished to cede to Pakistan. A few Kashmiris, supported by the Pakistani government rebelled against the king and captured a large part of the region (now Azad Kashmir or Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) (Kuszewska, 2016). The Kashmir Maharaja asked for assistance from India, which agreed to help if Kashmir joined India thereby marking the beginning of the Kashmir conflict. Pakistan promoted insurgency, instigating the Muslim Kashmiri youth by supplying them with arms against India. Both the nations have fought two wars over the Kashmir issue, which is the main cause of bitter bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. Along with Kashmir, India-
Pakistan also fight over the Saichen glacier, a high-altitude region in the Himalayas where soldiers from both the nations battle in below sub-zero temperatures.

Another concern for India is the strengthening alliance of Pakistan with China. For Pakistan, China is a close ally to balance the Indian threats. Given that the Indian territory is subject to Chinese interventions and that India has also lost a war with China, Pakistan regularly calls for Chinese pressure to alleviate Indian aggression. China also builds Pakistan to keep India under control. It is the largest supplier of arms and military equipment to Pakistan. Moreover, as part of its ‘belt and road’ project, China is also constructing the China Pakistan Economic Corridor that will pass through the part of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan giving the two nations a strategic edge over India.

River water is another issue over which India and Pakistan conflict. Pakistan is at a disadvantage because rivers in the Indus basin have origins in the Indian controlled Kashmir. As a result, Pakistan fears that India will block water by building dams and induce draughts and famine in the already water scarce nation (Kuszewska, 2016). However, under the 56-year-old Indus Water Treaty (IWT), the rivers in the region are divided between the two nations with Pakistan being allocated three major rivers. India’s share consists of only 20% of the water in the basin, but it still controls the river origins. Kugelman (2016) informs that the IWT allows India to build dams on Pakistan-allocated rivers so long as storage is kept to a minimum to allow water to keep flowing downstream. India uses this situation to pursue its hegemony over Pakistan and constantly threatens to revoke the water treaty.
Despite the political issues, Pakistan and India are culturally the closest countries in South Asia. People from both the countries have family ties on either side of the border. The languages of Urdu and Hindi are the same in their spoken forms which makes the two countries identical linguistically. Bollywood films and music are liked by Pakistanis whereas India patronizes many Pakistani singers and film stars.

**Sri Lanka.** Sri Lanka is an island nation that has maritime borders with India and the Maldives. Sri Lanka is a democratic nation governed by a semi-presidential system. It was under British rule until 1948 and was involved in a civil war for 26 years.

In the past, India was not able to pursue an independent policy with Sri Lanka given the ethnic tensions between the Sri Lankan government and the Sri Lankan Tamils. The northern part of Sri Lanka mainly consists of Tamils, who are ethnically from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. In the 1980s, these Sri Lankan Tamils were disenfranchised and marginalized through new policies that led to a civil war between the varied factions of Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sri Lankan government. Among these factions, which demanded a separate Tamil state, was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE pursued a militant strategy to meet their demands and was initially backed by the India government. However, in the late 1980s, India shifted its policy in support of the Sri Lankan government and initiated numerous peace talks between the warring factions. After the end of war with the LTTE in 2009, the political relations between the two nations have improved.

The growing Chinese presence in Sri Lanka is major concern for India. China has engaged Sri Lanka into its ‘belt and road’ initiative that consists of developing trade
routes from Asia into Europe and the Middle East. Under this project, China developed the Colombo and the Hambantota ports, a railway line and an airport. Moreover, the Hambantota port is leased to a Chinese firm for a period of 99 years, thereby, giving China a naval base in the Indian Ocean. Mourdoukoutas (2017) points out that the ports provide China with a safe route into the oil-laden Middle Eastern region, which is under the American naval hegemony. Var (2017) informs that China’s infrastructural engagement has put Lanka in a debt crisis which will obligate the island nation to side with China in future. To counter the Chinese influence, India has also engaged Sri Lanka in infrastructural projects and is likely to build roads, a port and an oil refinery at one fourth the cost quoted by the Chinese. Further, the two nations signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement which is Sri Lanka’s first nuclear partnership with any country.

India and Sri Lanka recently resolved a long-pending issue of Indian fisherman fishing illegally in Sri Lanka waters using equipment causing harm to marine life. Their activities had led to arrests and seizure of their fishing equipment. In India, the fishing debate was mainly over the Kachchatheevu island which was once a disputed territory India had ceded to maintain bilateral and friendly relations with Sri Lanka. However, the Indian state of Tamil Nadu launched an attack to retrieve the island that would give Indian farmers the right to fish using traditional methods, thereby, escalating the dispute into a bilateral contentious matter between the two nations. Both governments came up with an amicable solution to not shoot the fishermen who illegally enter the other’s waters, but to arrest and release them the next day.
Geographically, Sri Lanka, separated from India by a 26-km (14 mile) strait, was once a part of the Indian plateau. As a result, the two nations share a similar culture. Buddhism originated in India and was brought to the island nation by the Indian King Ashoka’s daughter, Sanghamitta. At present, Theravada Buddhism is widely practiced in Sri Lanka. From the soft power perspective, India provides the largest aid to Sri Lanka; one of India’s initiatives includes the construction of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural school through a grant of $300 million to provide classrooms, libraries and laboratories to Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim students.
Chapter 4: Theoretical Models of Agenda Building and Reputation Building

This chapter focuses on the two models of agenda building and reputation building that examine mediated public diplomacy. It also examines the approaches that scholars have theorized to understand public diplomacy. The application of agenda building and reputation building in the case of India’s mediated public diplomacy efforts on social media is also explained.

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is one of the most multidisciplinary areas of modern scholarship. The approaches that have examined public diplomacy emerged from the fields of political science, international relations, mass communication, and marketing. Scholars from these fields have studied public diplomacy as international public relations (Golan & Viatchaninova, 2014), relationship diplomacy (Zaharna, Arsenault & Fisher, 2014), nation branding (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2013) and country reputation (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017). Likewise, the theoretical underpinnings of mediated public diplomacy (Entman, 2008), international agenda-building and frame building (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009) have also been employed to explain public diplomacy.

Despite the multiple approaches, public diplomacy has suffered because scholars have conceptualized “confusing, incomplete and problematic definitions” of diplomacy focusing very little on the advancement of theory and methodology (Gilboa, 2008, p. 57). Moreover, the existing literature on public diplomacy is weak because “most studies are historical and deal with U.S. experiences during cold war” (Gilboa, 2008, p. 56). To overcome these inadequacies, Fullerton and Kendrick (2017), Gilboa (2008) and Golan
and Yang (2015) have called for communication scholars to take a converged approach to public diplomacy. They have argued that a combined approach enables to quantify the positive outcomes, if any, of a nation’s diplomatic efforts (Golan & Yang, 2015). In response to this call, this study integrates the agenda building model from political science (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976) and reputation building model (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990) from marketing communication and international relations to examine mediated public diplomacy of India.

**Mediated Public Diplomacy**

In this study, mediated public diplomacy is defined as the Indian government’s communication with social media users through its official public diplomacy accounts on the social networks of Twitter and Facebook to build agendas and national reputation. This definition is conceptualized from Entman (2008) who defined mediated public diplomacy as “short-term and more targeted efforts” (p. 88) of the head of the nation and his cabinet to “increase support of a country’s specific foreign policies among audiences beyond that country’s borders” (p. 88). Despite drawing largely from Entman’s (2008) proposition, the study does not base itself on his framework of the theory of mediated public diplomacy for the reasons cited below.

In his seminal work, Entman (2008) theorized mediated public diplomacy extending the cascading network activation model to examine the U.S. mediated public diplomacy efforts. He posited that, at a global level, the U.S. president and his cabinet seek to exert influence over two networks, the foreign elite, and the foreign media, in order to influence foreign public opinion. Foreign elites, such as diplomats serve as
influential information sources for the foreign media and foreign citizens (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). As a result, the U.S. president and his cabinet can positively portray their policies in the foreign media and also expect foreign elites to communicate these policies to foreign citizens.

In the same vein, to access the foreign media network, the U.S. government depends on two actors—foreign political elites to serve as media sources and the U.S. media and journalists. In case of the latter, Entman (2008) postulated that the U.S. government chooses the path of international inter-media agenda setting, where the U.S. president promotes his policies to the national media and expects these media to promote these policies positively to foreign media and ultimately to foreign audiences. Thus, in disseminating policies through both the foreign elites network and foreign media network, the U.S. government officials are required to keep journalists and foreign elites motivated to positively promote these policies to foreign audiences. But, does this mechanism operate in a similar fashion on social media, where governments communicate can directly with foreign citizens? The study addresses this question examining the mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia in the context of social media. It investigates how third parties—Twitter and Facebook—mediate this direct relationship between the Indian government and the social media users (see Golan & Yang, 2015).

Scholars such as Fahmy, Wanta and Nisbet (2012) pointed out that Entman’s (2008) model ignores the role of social media in mediated public diplomacy—an aspect central to this study and a lacuna that the study aims to address. Social media tools of
Twitter and Facebook serve as instant communication platforms, where governments do not have keep foreign elites and media motivated to positively promote their agendas. Moreover, political elites have opportunities to form their own direct network of audiences, who promote the nation’s agendas within their virtual networks and among citizens connected at a societal level (Himelboim, et al., 2014). Hence, this study argues that while promoting policies to foreign citizens on social media, the dependence on foreign elites and journalists is minimalized. State actors are likely to surpass traditional media to communicate and engage foreign audiences in order to build agendas. Thus, in mediated public diplomacy, the Internet (platforms such as social media, blogs) should not be examined in conjunction with traditional news media that Entman (2008) does in his model of mediated public diplomacy. This proposition needs to be examined. Hence, to investigate whether there are differences in mediated public diplomacy conducted through social media versus traditional media, this study asks: What type of information sources among ‘traditional sources’ and ‘online sources’ controlling for age, employment status, and education of social media users predict India’s national reputation?
Figure 2. In this replica of Entman’s (2008) model, the study separates the networks of social media and target national media (traditional media). The study argues that mediated public diplomacy via the Internet (platforms such as social media, blogs) should not be examined together with the traditional news media. This is because Entman's (2008) model expects government officials to keep journalists and foreign elites motivated to positively promote the government’s agendas to foreign audiences. However, during agenda building via social media, government officials do not need to motivate journalists and foreign elites because the government officials can communicate directly with foreign audiences.

Apart from ignoring agenda building on social media, Entman’s (2008) excessive dependence on media actors to positively shape the policies of a nation puts practicality of his model into question. Journalists are known to create their own agendas or to construct counter agendas (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013) and motivating foreign journalists to promote national policies favorably among foreign citizens is a challenging task. Also, Entman’s (2008) model explicates mediated public diplomacy from the perspective of the
United States where the media are endowed with freedom of press. In this explanation, Entman (2008) ignores how journalists are expected to operate in authoritative regimes assuming that media entities in all countries are always endowed with press freedom (Melki & Jabado, 2016). Due to these limitations, the study does not employ Entman’s (2008) model but examines the mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia from the models of agenda building and reputation building.

**Agenda Building Model**

**Definition and historical context.** In the policy making process, governments attract public attention and interest towards issues that the governments consider significant to build the public agenda. Conceptually, agendas prominent for the government are defined as formal agendas, whereas the agendas that the public consider as prominent called as public agendas (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976). This study investigates the agendas that the Indian government makes prominent for the social media users who follow its official accounts on Twitter and Facebook. Typically, formal agendas are found in court calendars, legislative docket, tribunal councils (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976), press releases, political speeches, and in this study on Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Indian government.

The agenda building perspective emerged from the field of political science in the 1970s when research in this area was dominated by propaganda, political participation, and public opinion. Cobb and Elder (1971) proposed agenda building as a structural alternative to the practically unviable democratic theory, which expects policymakers to stay informed about public agendas through the media and promote these public agendas.
Five years later, agenda building was advanced as a comparative analytical process to examine how competing actors such as the public and politicians initiate agendas and succeed in advancing them during the policy making process (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976). The scholars focused on the agenda source to provide three models: outside initiative, mobilization and inside initiative to explain the reciprocal flow of agendas between the government and the public.

In the first model of outside initiative, an agenda begins with a group outside of the government such as a non-governmental organization. The agenda is raised and intensified to an extent that it moves into the public sphere, and then eventually becomes part of the government agenda. In the second model of mobilization, the agenda initiates from within the administration and automatically becomes the government agenda. For this agenda to succeed, it needs to become a public agenda. Like the mobilization model, in the last model of inside initiative, an agenda is raised from within the government but is not meant to be advanced to the public (Cobb, Ross, & Ross 1976). The first two models inform the current study because it investigates the flow of agendas between Indian government accounts on social media and agendas build by social media users.

While Cobb, Ross, and Ross (1976) provided a conceptual analysis of the agenda building models, Lang and Lang (1991) illustrated the models’ application in their empirical investigation of the Watergate scandal. Lang and Lang (1991) stated that three actors, namely policymakers, the media and the public are interconnected in a circular network. The agendas they initiate are promoted from one actor’s domain to the other’s. Media actors play a vital role as they keep agendas prominent in the network through
their ongoing coverage, which allows policymakers to advance their own interests about the agendas. This generates more media coverage and public concern for the agendas.

The three actors continue with the reciprocal exchange of agendas in the network generating more media coverage and public concern for the agendas. Ultimately, when an agenda reaches the saturation level, it falls out of the network. Although Lang and Lang (1991) recognized and substantiated the role of media in the agenda building framework, this study does not examine agendas of traditional media actors in the agenda building process on Twitter and Facebook.

In the last 40 years, scholars have intermittently provided evidence of government’s influence on public agendas (Berkowitz, 1987; Cohen, 1995; Denham, 2010; Kiousis & Stromback, 2010). In his study, Berkowitz (1987) investigated agenda building on television by analyzing the local and national newscasts in Indiana, United States. He found that policy makers and other elite members dominated the agenda building process because television relies heavily on press conferences and comments from the elite as their primary news sources. Likewise, two inquiries conducted 15 years apart examined agendas in government information subsidies such as the U.S presidents’ speeches and press conferences. These studies provided evidence of a strong influence of the president’s agenda on public agenda (Cohen, 1995; Kiousis & Stromback, 2010).

A notable finding in both the studies is that, when compared to other agendas, the president’s foreign policy agenda had the strongest and the long-lasting influence on the public. Additionally, Cohen (1995) noted that a president’s popularity does not give him an edge over unpopular presidents in the agenda building process. In fact, presidential
influence on the public is ephemeral because uncontrollable events and crisis compete for and win over presidential agendas that further diverts the short-term public attention from the government’s agenda (Cohen, 1995). In political science, inquiries into the influence of formal agenda on the public have mainly considered the president (Kalyango, 2008). Inquiries of public relations scholars as well have been restricted to subsidiaries from popular presidential candidates, especially during the election period (Kiousis & Stromback, 2010). This study moves beyond political leaders to examine content from government agencies such as embassies and ministry channels on social media.

Seminal theorists of agenda building also pointed out that besides making agendas salient, the mechanism also enables political actors to explain their impressions about the agendas. “These choices made in the agenda building process have potentially profound consequences both in the sense of affecting the material realities of people’s lives and in the sense of influencing their interpretations of those realities” (Elder & Cobb, 1984, p. 115). Thus, if agenda building has such profound influences on individuals and their lives, then agenda building that takes place through tweets and Facebook status updates are likely to predict the national reputation for India among social media users.

**Agenda building and mediated public diplomacy.** As an integral part of mediated public diplomacy, agenda building is an intermittent contest of agenda promotion between governments, media, and citizens as the key actors and their reciprocal effects on agenda prominence (Cheng, Huang & Chan, 2017). A few scholars have argued that mediated public diplomacy is, in fact, agenda building at an international level (Cheng, Golan & Kiousis, 2016; Sheafer & Gabay, 2009).
Specifically, out of all agenda building actors, the process mostly privileges governments at a global level because of the rise of government-sponsored broadcasting (Golan & Viatchaninova, 2014) and its convergence with social networks (Himelboim, et al., 2014). But, does this process also work in the same manner in case of the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook? This proposition is still to be examined.

Political science scholars examined mediated public diplomacy mainly as a comparative process where nations compete to gain control over foreign media to shape perceptions about global events (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Mediated public diplomacy is approached as a contest between nations to promote agendas to international media. These studies, in particular, investigated intervening factors such as of cultural and political congruency between a nation and a target nation (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009), extent of migration between two countries (Johnson, 1997), geographic proximity (Jones, Van Aelst, & Vliegenthart, 2011), past colonial relations (Nnaemeka & Richstad, 1980), language and trade (Wu, 2007), and a nation’s power and standing (Chang, 1998), which influence mediated public diplomacy.

A study by Sheafer and Gabay (2009) focused on the contest between two nations over international agenda building as means of mediated public diplomacy. They investigated Entman’s (2008) proposition that cultural and political congruence between a nation and a target country will result in the target country’s media adopting the nation’s agendas. Sheafer and Gabay (2009) examined the two strategic acts: Israel’s disengagement from Gaza and the general elections in the Palestinian Authority to analyze the success of Israel and Palestine (actors) in promoting their agenda and frames.
in the U.S. and U.K. news media. The scholars concluded that agenda-frame contests involve a complex relationship between the rival nations (Israel and Palestine), the governments of the foreign nations (U.S. or U.K.) and the media (Sheafer & Gabay, 2009). Although Israel was successful in promoting its agendas to the U.S. media, it had to first compete with the agendas, which foreign governments (U.S. or U.K.) promoted in their own media (The New York Times or The Guardian) before it competed with its rival nation (Palestine) to promote its own agenda-frames. Moreover, Sheafer and Gabay (2009) pointed out that a nation should also compete with media organizations, both domestic and global, which promote their distinct aspects of an agenda.

In another study conducted six years later, Sheafer et al. (2014) measured the political and value proximity of Israel in promoting frames to other countries and found evidence that political proximity to a target nation ensures greater influence when promoting a nation’s foreign policy. However, Sheafer et al. (2014) argued that one should consider not only the dyadic proximity between two actors (i.e., Country A that attempts to promote its frames to Country C), but also the relative proximity between Countries A and C while considering the proximity between the rival Country B and the target Country C. The above studies consider a government’s influence on foreign newspapers but do not measure its impact on foreign public. Moreover, the studies do not consider the impact of government communication via social media. This study addresses this dearth in literature by examining India’s mediated public diplomacy in South Asia in the social media context.
**Agenda building and social media.** A few scholars, especially political scientists, have used agenda setting and agenda building interchangeably. Kalyango (2008) noted that agenda setting, which is the influence of media actors, in fact, is conceptualized as the influence of political actors, involved in the process of making certain agendas prominent for the public. He added that those who examine agenda building as an agenda setting function make inquiries into the influence of public opinion on government officials (Kalyango, 2008). A recent study from the mass communication perspective incorporates this conceptualization in its examination. Luo (2014) examined the influence of online public agendas on the Chinese government and government-controlled media agendas. This examination of the public agendas in the content published on Qiangguo and Tianya, the two most popular discussion forums in China supported the two-way agenda exchange between the public and the media. Although, Luo’s (2014) analysis did not show any influence of the public agenda over the government agenda; on certain occasions, the government agenda did influence public agenda thereby demonstrating agenda building influence. Luo (2014) concluded that digital media, including social networking sites, are alternatives to government-controlled media in China and channels of political participation that give the public the power to challenge the government authority.

Interlinks between agenda building actors on social media provide actors with multiple opportunities to shape each other’s agendas. Bjola and Jiang (2015) stated that interactive features on social media such as comments and retweets provide instant feedback to government agencies who not only learn about opinions of their audiences
but also reshape their messages accordingly. In the social media context, Bjola and Jiang (2015) compared the diplomatic strategies of the European Union, the United States and Japanese embassies on the Chinese social networking site Weibo. They examined diplomacy efforts from the engagement aspects of agenda setting, presence expansion, and conversation generation and concluded that these embassies had successfully “alleviated the suspicions of Chinese authorities and managed to establish open communication channels with Chinese citizens” (p. 8).

In the case of the United States, Bretschneider and Mergel (2011) found that increased online conversations on social media enabled citizens to draw the government’s attention to the public agendas. During the Obama administration, citizens could ask direct questions to the president through the White House’s initiative ‘Open for Questions’. By rating these questions, the feature allowed users to highlight the urgency of an agenda and built the agendas for the U.S. government. These studies are an excellent evidence of mediated public diplomacy through governmental control over the agenda building apparatus at an international level. Despite this, these studies do not account for the impact of mediated public diplomacy efforts on public opinion.

**Challenges of the agenda building model.** Agenda building is relatively a new framework, but there are a few predictive challenges that it faces. First, agenda building equates frequency and prominence of an agenda with its influence. Nisbet (2008) stated, “The more prominent the actor in coverage or the more frequently appearing specific type of news peg, the greater the influence that particular source is inferred to have on the agenda building process” (p. 24). Second, on any media platform, agendas exist in
conjunction with each other, but many are disregarded because of lack of space on the platform (Nisbet, 2008). For instance, a newspaper, compared to a website, gives attention to only a few agendas and disregards others because of the limited space. As a result, Nisbet (2008) argued that agenda building depends on the agenda carrying capacity of the media platform. Further, Berkowitz (1987) stated that the agenda building mechanism, which is mainly studied using content analysis is limited in its scope because the analysis restricts it to the observation of only power relationships in society.

**Reputation Building Model**

**Definition and measurement.** Reputation building refers to collective judgments about a foreign country’s culture, policy, and behavior that define its national image (Mercer, 1996; Wang, 2006). This study defines national reputation as a sum total of perceptions of social media users towards India on aspects of politics, emotions, culture, economy, and regional standing. A positive national reputation boasts development and attracts wealth because foreign audiences perceive the nation as a reliable location to set up businesses, take vacations, study, or buy goods produced by the nation (Anholt, 2016). In this study, the national reputation of India is examined through a survey of social media users.

To measure national reputation, this study employs the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index, which is adapted from Harris-Fombrun Reputation Quotient used for measuring corporate reputation (Passow, Fehlmann & Grahlow, 2005). Previous studies using this index examined the reputation of Ghana among Americans (Kiambi, 2017), the influence of a U.S. diplomacy initiative called Café USA on the perceptions of South
Koreans (Seo, 2010) and the perceptions of U.S. citizens about South Koreans (Yang et al., 2008).

**Approaches to the reputation building model.** National reputation has also been investigated from varied “disciple-specific theories, models and terminologies” (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017, p. 2). Scholars have defined national reputation in terms of nation building (Taylor & Kent, 2006), strategic public diplomacy (Kruckeberg & Vujnovic, 2005), nation branding (Anholt, 2007) and more recently place branding (Govers & Go, 2016) and the model of country concept (Fullerton & Kendrick, 2017). These approaches are not explicated in detail here because a comprehensive inquiry revealed that, at the core, all scholars examined the same mechanism that aims to change the perceptions of foreign citizens about a nation. Moreover, there were little variations in the theoretical conceptualizations given by these scholars. Golan (2016) argued that although these diversifications lead to multiple intellectual expansions in the field, they have created confusion about the basic conceptualizations underlying the process of public diplomacy.

National reputation conceptualized in this study is most closely related to the concept of nation brand which British scholar Simon Anholt coined in the 1990s. He integrated the constructs of national reputation and nation image. Nation brand is when one prefers German cars, Italian opera, French food, or Indian spices. Anholt (2007) strongly opined that ‘nation brand’ should be separated from ‘nation branding. He argued that nation brand, of which national reputation is a subset, cannot be managed like a corporate brand using commercial marketing techniques of branding and advertising.
This is because nations are judged not on publicity techniques they employ, but on their aid and relief efforts that result in regional development (Anholt, 2007).

Recent scholarship largely has disagreed with Anholt’s (2016) conceptualizations and also with the secondary status he gives to branding techniques in the formation of public opinion (see Fullerton and Kendrick, 2017; Jain & Winner, 2013). For instance, Fullerton and Kendrick (2017) who have drawn largely from Anholt’s (2007) work for their Model of Country Concept term his assessments on nation brand and nation branding as “traditional” and “stereotypical” (p. 3). They posited that as the world turns into a global village, branding strategies should not be neglected as they play a vital role in shaping foreign public opinion.

This study does not consider the concept of nation brand in its conceptualization of national reputation. Although national reputation and nation brand are people’s perceptions about a country, they are distinct (Jain & Winner, 2013). National reputation is a perception that the nation may or may not actively pursue to manipulate, whereas nation brand is a perception that is managed through the intentional use of principles and strategies of branding (Jain & Winner, 2013).

In the same vein, Gilmore (2001) provided evidence contrary to Anholt’s (2016) propositions and showed that quick-fix rebranding techniques can build a positive national reputation. For instance, Spain promoted all government-sponsored, as well as, private nation building activities under the symbol of the sun created by artist Joan Miro. Modernization was achieved through privatization and expansion of Spain’s corporations beyond its national boundaries, rebuilding of its cities and the rise in the prominence of
its celebrities in foreign nations (Gilmore, 2001). Further, during the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Spain managed to attract world attention through its branding strategies (Gilmore, 2001). Thus, within a short period, changed public perception of itself as a poor nation to be the world’s second tourist destination. Overall, scholars such as Jain and Winner (2013) recognized that national reputation and nation brand overlap in their conceptualizations and advocate that these constructs should not be used interchangeably.

**National reputation and social media.** More than 50 years ago, McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated in their Chapel Hill study that the media decide agendas of public importance. Since then, numerous scholars have examined the significant role of media in shaping public opinion. The media also play a fundamental role in building national reputation among foreign audiences, whose experiences with a nation are generally through indirect experiences that the media provide (Kiambi, 2017).

Increasingly, new communication technologies have paved the way to use social media for building national reputation. One exceptional example is Curators of Sweden, the Swedish government’s initiative to showcase itself as a global and borderless nation that provides freedom of speech (Christensen, 2013). Under the project, the @Sweden account on Twitter was managed each week by one citizen, who had the freedom to share his ideas, thoughts, or any other content anytime. The strategy used “the guise of transparent and democratic selection and editorial processes” to create positive public opinion (Christensen, 2013, p. 30).

Recently, Groshek, Guo, Cutino and Elasmar (2017) proposed a novel methodological framework to extract and interpret reputation from Twitter. Using Cuba
as a case study, the scholars extracted more than four million tweets sourced from 1,112,248 actors who included public officials, citizens, algorithms, and bots and found that majority of tweets about Cuba originated from outside the nation. Also, in terms of agendas, the study found that these outsiders largely talked about the diplomatic agreements between Cuba and the United States, which could be due to the agenda-setting effects of traditional media. Thus, the scholars concluded that the information flow about Cuba on social media is not hierarchical. However, the study of Groshek et al. (2017) analyzed only English tweets but their data extraction query resulted in majority tweets in Indonesian language. Data also included tweets in Spanish and Portuguese, which were not considered.

Recent studies such as Groshek et al. (2017) demonstrate that national reputation in the social media context cannot be comprehensively analyzed through content analysis. This study advocates that national reputation should be investigated through surveys of social media users. Therefore, to measure the national reputation of India, this study conducts a survey of social media users.

**The Present Study**

One of the reliable indicators of national reputation is public opinion; hence, this study measures the reputation of India through a survey of Twitter and Facebook users. On the same lines as the above scholarships, this study also examines reputation in the social media context. There is an absence of adequate scholarly work on the reputation of India despite the relevant actors’ (e.g. prime minister, president, the ministry of external affairs, embassies, media, Indian diaspora, and entrepreneurs) involvement in mediated
public diplomacy efforts at a regional and international level through social media. However, before a government’s efforts to manage its national reputation can be examined, Yang et al. (2008) stated that the measurement of its national reputation is essential. Hence, this study measures the national reputation using the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index.

The study also examines national reputation in the social media context. This is a novel approach that is not known to be studied. Moreover, among Twitter and Facebook users, what factors predict national reputation of India are unknown. For this purpose, this study draws on factors that have found to predict corporate reputation in the social media context. Previous studies have demonstrated that the factors of engagement on social media, online social relations, information sources are known to predict corporate reputation among customers (Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016; Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). However, the success of these factors in influencing national reputation is understudied. As a result, the study proceeds with the assumption that: engagement of social media users with Indian government accounts, their online social relations with India, and their sources of information about India, and alignment of issues with the agendas that Indian government builds on Twitter and Facebook will predict social media users’ perceptions about national reputation. The next chapter considers these factors in detail.
Chapter 5: Factors Influencing National Reputation on Social Media Platforms

This chapter examines the factors that predict national reputation in the social media context. The term reputation comes from the field of marketing and was used to examine customer perceptions about corporations and brands. National reputation is similar to corporate reputation because both involve measuring an organization’s reputation.

As a corporate firm is equated with a nation, the study assumes that factors that influence corporate reputation on social media will be also predict the national reputation of India. Among the various factors, scholars have found are media use, online social relations (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012), and engagement with a firm’s social media activities (Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016) that predict reputation on social media. However, these factors are yet to be tested in the case of India, especially on social media. This chapter considers each of these factors below:

Engagement on Social Media

Engagement is a multidimensional concept that has been scrutinized largely from different perspectives given to the lack of consensus on its universal definition among scholars. An individual’s psychological state of mind takes centrality when we consider his engagement in an activity. Especially, in marketing research, scholars have taken a three-dimensional approach to the cognitive, behavioral and emotional connect of customers with a brand to measure engagement (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, Buyukcan-Tetik & Beukeboom, 2015; Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014). Despite the differences in
conceptualizations, some scholars such as Van Doorn et al. (2010) stated that firms aim for high level of engagement because it increases their reputation.

With the advent of social media, scholarly interests in brand engagement shifted from behavioral-cognitive intent measures to instant quantifiable interactions with a brand (Kozinets, 2014). Combining the constructs of consumption, contribution and creation, Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski (2016) considered likes, shares and comments on brand-related content to measure engagement on social media. Based on these aspects, this study defines engagement with a foreign nation on social media as the sum total of consumption (following and reading posts from foreign government channels, watching videos, picture, and images related to these channels), contribution (liking, sharing of foreign nation-sponsored channels content) and creation (commenting on or writing for a foreign nation-sponsored channel).

A recent study found a positive relationship between engagement with an international airline’s social media activities and the firm’s reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015). The scholars conceptualized engagement in terms of ‘familiarity’ (cognition) with and ‘following’ (behavior) of the airline’s social media activities. They argued that higher engagement correlated with positive perception of the firm’s reputation because of customers were exposed to positive content about the firm that aroused positive sentiments among customers. Dijkmans et al. (2015) also concluded that highly engaged social media audiences who had never used the brand rated the firm’s reputation higher than highly engaged customers who had direct experience with the brand.
Just like firms create online communities that are specific to themselves to actively engage their social media audience (Li, Berens & de Maertelaere, 2013), governments on social media are also likely to create interest groups, which network around their social media channels. A good example is the Indian government’s diplomacy accounts that this study examines. With the Ministry of External Affairs, *Indian Diplomacy*, and embassy accounts on Twitter and Facebook, India has also attracted a large group of followers who share, like, and comment on their content and, at times, involve in conversations. Hence, these quantifiable variables are a good measure of India’s reputation in the social media context.

A few scholars have argued that engagement is not a superficial measure of likes and shares, but one should necessarily consider conversations between authorities and audiences. For instance, using the dialogic communication paradigm, Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015) measured engagement on Twitter and Facebook profiles of 11 Minister of Foreign Affairs. They argued that instead of number of ‘likes’ on an embassy’s social media profile, one must consider the volume of direct dialogue (in the form of replies to questions, responses to criticism and information delivery) between government social media accounts and their followers. In contrast, Li, Berens and de Maertelaere (2013) argued that for engagement, social media consumers do not necessarily need to produce brand-related content, which requires them to initiate conversations. In fact, their attitudes and behavior are influenced by merely reading tweets and posts of other social media users.
Online Social Relations

Empirical research on relationships in the social media context has demonstrated assessments of the construct from multiple dimensions. Studies in this larger realm have mainly concentrated on how online behavior and relationships reciprocate with offline behavior in terms of ability to trust, be honest and committed (Gunter, 2013; Whitty & Gavin, 2001). Despite the vast literature, scholars still do not concur on whether online relationships have positive or negative consequences on an individual’s real-world behavior (Gunter, 2013; Seo, 2010). The reciprocity has also rarely been examined between relationships among social media audiences and their perceptions about national reputation.

In a widely-cited study, Kietzmann et al. (2011) listed online relationships as one of the building blocks of social media that represents the extent to which users relate to each other. Online relationships develop when, “two or more users have some form of association that leads them to converse, share objects of sociality, meet up, or simply just list each other as a friend or fan” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 246). Interconnections among users on social networking sites are an important source of public opinion (Kietzmann et al., 2011). By allowing members to network with each other, social networking sites provide platforms for members to build relationships and influence the behavior of other members (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012).

Scholars in the field of marketing supported the premise that peer-to-peer relationships in the social media context impact attitudes towards products (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt & Füller, 2013; Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012) and purchase decisions.
(Kozinets, 2014). In one study, Wang et al. (2012) found that the strength of peer relationships and their identification with the peer group on social media leads to increase in conversations that positively influence perceptions about a product. Based on Wang et al. (2012), this study proposes that online relationships may also predict the national reputation for India.

Personal experience and individual’s familiarity with a nation are dominant factors that influence public perceptions, especially when one considers national reputation (Kiambi, 2017; Zatepilina-Monacell, Yang & Wang, 2017). Personal experiences are defined in terms of travel to the country, encounters with citizens of the country, using products of the country, and participating in cultural events related to a country. For instance, Kiambi (2017) stated that personal experiences with a nation increases familiarity and positively effects national reputation. In this recent study, Kiambi (2017) examined U.S. perceptions about Ghana and concluded that familiarity mediated the interaction effects between experiences and country reputation such that even when individuals had indirect experiences with Ghana, their evaluation of Ghana’s reputation was high. However, in the social media context, inquiry into these factors have led to contrary findings.

In her study on the reputation of the United States among South Koreans, Seo (2010) measured online social relations at two levels: the number of U.S. citizens (network size) South Koreans connected with on the Internet and the amount of time they spent interacting with U.S. citizens (network time). Seo (2010) found that individuals who had stronger online social relations with the U.S. citizens, rated the United States
negatively than others. She also concluded that exposure to negative information about the nation from online social relations may influence previously formed perceptions (see also Park & Lee, 2007). Hence, Seo (2010) argued that personal experience and familiarity with a nation does not necessarily result in individuals thinking highly of a nation. Hence, this study does not consider personal influence and familiarity to examine reputation, but it does consider the nature and channels of information in the next section. To conceptualize online social relations, this study borrows from Seo’s (2010) study, which defined online social relations in terms of number of connections (followers and friends) and amount of time spend interacting with them.

**Information Channels: Online and Traditional Sources**

Previous research has emphasized the importance of communication channels that the public utilize or depend on to form reputation (Deephouse, 2000). To enhance public awareness, it is critical to know which communication channels are mostly used for by foreign public to know about a country.

In their study, Yang et al. (2008) found that the U.S. citizens use communication channels such as online media, personal communication, national television, national newspapers, cable television to receive information about South Korea. The study participants reported that they are most likely to use online media, personal communication, national television and newspapers, and cable television to know about South Korea. Also, the results showed that preference of personal communication, online media, and national mainstream media were highly correlated with the favorability of national reputation.
Measuring National Reputation

To measure how social media audiences rate the reputation of India, the widely-cited Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (Passow et al., 2005) to measure country reputation will be used in the study. The index measures country reputation on the following aspects:

**Emotional appeal.** How much the country is liked, admired, and respected.

**Cultural appeal.** How well the country retains the values of distinct, appealing culture and a rich historical past.

**Economic appeal.** Perceptions of the country’s competitiveness, profitability, growth prospects, and risk of investment.

**Political appeal.** Perceptions of the country’s political status such as internal relationships, democracy, stable political environments and its political leadership.

**Regional appeal.** Perceptions of the country as having high standards in its dealings with global community, good causes, and environmental policies.

**Demographic Variables**

Socioeconomic status and age tend to be closely related to Internet use, online social relations, and experience of other countries (Seo, 2010). Specifically, people with a higher level of education are more likely to access computing devices, get information online, and have opportunities to have first-hand experiences with other countries. In terms of the effects of age, younger generations tend to adopt new technologies more easily and quickly than older generations. However, younger people are less likely to be able to afford to trips to other countries. It is important to incorporate these demographic
aspects in this study because from the perspective of data analysis, including these variables will help control for spurious relationships.

**Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Previous studies have measured social media users’ level of engagement with the content through reactions such as likes, shares, and comments (Cho, Schweickart & Haase, 2014; Kim & Yang, 2017). Scholars have suggested that individual and group-level psychological factors explain the manner in which users react to content. For instance, as compared to commenting and sharing, liking content requires limited efforts (Kim & Yang, 2017). Also, choosing what content to like and share is a result of a contagious influence that social media users have on each other (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). These scholars have also argued that when content is embedded with interactive elements such as hyperlinks and framed rhetorically to generate answers from followers, it generated more likes and comments (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). Nonetheless, user reactions are a measure of political public opinion that necessitates an examination of how agendas differ in relation to these behaviors. One example is of DiGrazia, McKelvey, Bollen and Rojas (2013) who found a significant association between tweets that mention a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives and electoral performance. However, an examination of agendas in tweets and Facebook updates in relation to user reactions has not been done in the case of India’s mediated public diplomacy in South Asia. For this purpose, this study asks:

- **RQ 1.** What agendas do Indian government’s social media accounts build for Twitter and Facebook users in relation to (i) likes/favorites (ii) replies/comments (iii) shares/retweets?
Agendas are issues that governments prioritize to increase the importance of these issues for the public (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976). This process is defined as agenda building. Conceptually, agendas prominent for the government are defined as formal agendas, whereas the agendas that the public consider as prominent are called as public agendas (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976). Typically, formal agendas are found in court calendars, legislative docket, tribunal councils (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976), press releases, political speeches, and in this study on Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Indian government.

In a recent study, Luo (2014) examined the influence of online public agendas on the Chinese government and government-controlled media agendas. This examination of the public agendas in the content published on Qiangguo and Tianya, the two most popular discussion forums in China, supported the two-way agenda exchange between the public and the media. Although, Luo’s (2014) analysis did not show any influence of the public agenda over the government agenda; on certain occasions, the government agenda did influence public agenda thereby demonstrating an agenda-building influence. The question of whether an agenda-building linkage exists between the Indian government and social media users has not been examined. Hence, the study asks the research question:

- **RQ 2: What is the ranking order of agendas prominent on the Indian government’s social media accounts compared to agendas that users rank prominently on Twitter and Facebook?**

Scholars have equated a corporate firm with a nation. Hence, the study assumes that factors that influence corporate reputation on social media will be also predict the
national reputation of India. Among the various factors, scholars have found that media use, online social relations (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012), and engagement with a firm’s social media activities (Schivinski, Christodoulides & Dabrowski, 2016) predict reputation on social media. However, these factors are yet to be tested in the case of India, especially on social media. The study considers the following research question:

- **RQ 3. What factors on social media among ‘engagement on social media,’ ‘online social relations,’ and ‘information sources’ controlling for age, employment status, and education predict national reputation for India?**

Yang et al. (2008) demonstrated that the U.S. citizens are most likely to use online media, personal communication, national television and newspapers, and cable television to get information about South Korea. Their preference for these media predicted the national reputation of South Korea. However, these information sources have not been examined in case of the mediated public diplomacy of India. Entman (2008) has argued that in mediated public diplomacy, the government is expected to keep journalists and foreign elites motivated to positively promote the government’s agendas to foreign audiences. However, this study argues that during agenda building via social media, the government does not need to motivate journalists and foreign elites because the government officials can communicate directly with foreign audiences. It is expected that this direct communication may predict national reputation for India differently than when the same communication is mediated via foreign elites and traditional media. However, this premise is yet to be examined. Hence, this study asks the question:

- **RQ 4. What type of information sources among ‘traditional sources’ and ‘online sources’ controlling for age, employment status, and education predict the national reputation of India?**
A recent study found a positive relationship between engagement with an international airline’s social media activities and the firm’s reputation (Dijkmans et al., 2015). The scholars conceptualized engagement in terms of ‘familiarity’ (cognition) with and ‘following’ (behavior) of the airline’s social media activities. They argued that higher engagement correlated with positive perception of the firm’s reputation because customers were exposed to positive content about the firm that aroused positive sentiments among customers. Dijkmans et al. (2015) also concluded that highly engaged social media audiences who had never used the brand rated the firm’s reputation higher than highly engaged customers who had direct experience with the brand.

Just like firms create online communities that are specific to themselves to actively engage their social media audience (Li, Berens & de Maertelaere, 2013), governments on social media are also likely to create interest groups, which network around their social media channels. A good example is the Indian government’s diplomacy accounts that this study examines. With the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Diplomacy, and embassy accounts on Twitter and Facebook, India has also attracted a large group of followers who share, like, and comment on their content and, at times, involve in conversations. Hence, these quantifiable variables are likely to be a good measure of India’s reputation in the social media context. Hence this study proposes the following hypothesis:

- **H1**: Higher the level of engagement of social media users with Indian government accounts on social media, the more positive the users rate the reputation of India.
In her study on the reputation of the U.S. among South Koreans, Seo (2010) found that individuals who had stronger online social relations with the U.S. citizens, rated the U.S. negatively than others. Seo (2010) measured online social relations at two levels: the number of the U.S. citizens (network size) that South Koreans connected with on the Internet and the amount of time they spent interacting with the U.S. citizens (network time). Based on Seo (2010), the study proposes a similar hypothesis in the case of India:

• **H2:** Higher the degree of social media users’ online social relations with India the more negatively they rate the reputation of India.

Age tends to be closely related to Internet use and online social relations (Seo, 2010). Specifically, people with a higher level of education are more likely to access computing devices, get information online, and have opportunities to have first-hand experiences with other countries. In terms of the effects of age, younger generations tend to adopt new technologies more easily and quickly than older generations. Based on this, the study hypothesizes that:

• **H3:** Higher the level of education of social media users, accounting for their age, the more positively they rate the reputation of India.

In the next chapter, the design to examine these questions and hypotheses is explained. Operational definitions of key variables in the context of mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia are also provided.
Chapter 6: Methodology

This chapter explains the methodology employed to answer the proposed research questions and hypotheses stated in the previous chapter. A quantitative content analysis of data gathered from the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook and a survey of social media users (followers of these channels) was conducted to examine India’s mediated public diplomacy from the theoretical perspectives of agenda building and reputation building.

Quantitative Content Analysis

A quantitative content analysis will examine Twitter and Facebook content that the Indian government accounts build on their accounts administered by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and Indian embassies in the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It should be noted that the official account of Indian Diplomacy and the Indian Embassy in Pakistan do not have Facebook accounts to be included in the analysis.

Krippendorf (2013) defines content analysis as a method to make valid and replicable inferences from content (such as text, images, art, sound) to the context of their use. Content analysis is best suited for comparative research, such as this study, because it allows handling of large user-generated data in an organized and objective manner (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012). Given that Twitter and Facebook generate a large amount data daily, content analysis is an appropriate method to examine tweets and status updates that the Indian government accounts share and publish on social media.
To examine diplomacy, previous studies have used content analysis in order to investigate content posted by embassies and Ministries of Foreign Affairs on their social media accounts (Kampf, Manor & Segev, 2015; Strauß et al., 2015; Zhong & Lu, 2013). For instance, Kampf et al. (2013) chose foreign ministries of 11 nations based on their economic standing, geography, and culture and analyzed the content they posted on their official Twitter accounts and Facebook pages during two periods of 21 days each. All the tweets and status updates were analyzed for variables such as presence of videos and images, themes and the target audience of the content. Likewise, Strauß et al. (2015) analyzed tweets from 60 randomly chosen government agencies from National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Library of Congress to the Department of Homeland Security and the Center for Disease Control. They coded the data for variables such as frequency of tweets, presence of interactive elements such as hashtags, hyperlinks, type of content (news releases, newsletters, videos, position papers), and engagement (use of the symbol @; or direct conversations).

In this study, a few variables such as interactive elements, themes (agendas), and the target audience of the agendas examined are borrowed from Kampf et al. (2015) and Strauß et al. (2015). The variables considered in this study are briefly introduced in the section ‘coding category system’ whereas their operational definitions are given in the codebook (Appendix A).

**Unit of analysis.** The units of analysis are tweets posted on Twitter and status updates published on Facebook accounts of Indian government accounts. According to Neuendorf (2017), a unit is a word, character, theme, period or any identifiable entity that
enables the researcher to ascertain the population and draw a sample from it to measure the variables under study.

This study aims to identify agendas built through tweets and Facebook updates and to analyze the metadata (likes, shares, favorites and reactions such as haha, sad, angry, loves, wows) associated with the agendas and the actors who make these agendas prominent on Twitter and Facebook. Actors such as the media, politicians or other social media users whose tweets or status updates are retweeted are coded for analysis.

Tweets are messages of up to 140 characters in length that users publish on their Twitter profiles. Scholars term tweets as ‘electronic word-of-mouth’ (Kim, Sung & Kang, 2014) and as a news source (Gross & Johnson, 2016), which explains their functionality. No mutual consent is required to read tweets posted by other Twitter users. Likewise, messages that users publish on Facebook are called status updates. Unlike tweets, there is no character limit on Facebook status updates. In the case of both the social media platforms, users can also deliver tweets and status updates in private to other users through instant messaging. Privately delivered content is targeted to a specific individual due to its limited reach and influence. For this purpose, this study considers for analysis only publicly available tweets and status updates.

A tweet and a Facebook status update is likely to include any content in the form of text and images such as photos, maps, gifs, illustrations, and videos. Content in the form of videos will not be included in the analysis because of the complexities related to unitizing (Skalski, Neuendorf & Cajigas, 2017). In this regard, Skalski et al. (2017) point out that coders can rarely categorize continuous streaming content in videos into tangible
units. Further, that same study shows that acceptable agreement between coders is also highly unlikely, especially on the distinct beginning and end frames in a video. Meanwhile, coding videos can result in the absence of ‘unitizing reliability’ defined as “the consistency in dividing the stream of activity into units” (Poole, Van de Ven, Dooley & Holmes, 2000, p. 148). The decision for this study is to avoid compromising on reliability or to be put in a situation of refraining from conducting inter-coder reliability assessments (Neuendorf, 2017). Hence, this study does not consider videos posted on Indian government accounts on social media.

**Sampling.** From all the Indian government accounts, the total tweets gathered were 60,021 and the total status updates obtained were 25,780. A systematic random sampling was employed to sample tweets and status updates. Systematic random sampling consists of selecting every nth unit from a sampling frame; the nth unit is determined by dividing the sampling frame size by the sample size (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2014). Thus, for instance, to draw a sample of 400 units from the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan on Twitter, the sampling frame of 2,840 units was divided by 400 which resulted in the nth unit of 7. Thus, every 7th unit was included in the sample. Similar procedures were performed in the cases of other accounts to draw a sample of 400 units from each account. Equal sample sizes facilitate comparisons between different groups, such as the 15 Indian government accounts (Schutt, 2006).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accounts on Twitter</th>
<th>Sampling frame</th>
<th>Sampled units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Afghanistan</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Bangladesh</td>
<td>5,091</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Maldives</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Nepal</td>
<td>2,272</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Public Diplomacy</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of External Affairs</td>
<td>14,300</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A sampling frame was drawn from a list consisting of the first tweet posted since the launch date of each of the Indian government accounts until April 30, 2017. Using systematic random sampling, a sample of 400 units was drawn from each account. The embassy in Bhutan was excluded from the analysis because the tweets published as on April 30, 2017 were only 57

Drawing equal sample sizes of 400 units from each Indian government accounts is likely to result in the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of an Indian government account. At the same time, selecting a sample proportionate to its size in the population would result in sample sizes with large differences that do not permit statistical comparisons between the accounts. For instance, very few units would be sampled from the Indian Embassy in Maldives compared to the Indian Public Diplomacy that has a large sampling frame (see Table 1). Hence, drawing samples using systematic random sampling is appropriate for this study because certain characteristics of the population (agendas made prominent in the tweets and status updates) are not repeated for every nth unit. To elucidate, the Indian government does not publish, for instance, a politics agenda
in every seventh tweet or status update. The avoidance of a periodic pattern in publishing the tweets and status updates provides a representative sample (Schutt, 2006). Tables 1 and 2 show the total units in the sampling frame for each of the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook and the sample size included in the final analysis.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accounts on Facebook</th>
<th>Sampling frame</th>
<th>Sampled units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Afghanistan</td>
<td>2,497</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Bangladesh</td>
<td>6,740</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Bhutan</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Maldives</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Nepal</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of External Affairs</td>
<td>14,453</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A sampling frame was drawn from a list consisting of the first status update ever posted since the launch date of each of the Indian government accounts until April 30, 2017. Using systematic random sampling, a sample of 400 units was drawn from each account. The Indian Embassy in Pakistan does not have a Facebook account nor does Facebook have an equivalent of Twitter’s *Indian Diplomacy* account.

Most studies that have examined tweets and status updates employ simple random sampling to counter differences in sample sizes and to reduce the large quantity of data to a manageable portion. Additionally, scholars do not agree on a definite sample size with regards to samples drawn from social media. For instance, Kampf et al. (2015) considered a sample size of 2,689 tweets and 954 Facebook posts in their six-week analysis of content published by 11 foreign ministries. In contrast, Strauß et al. (2015)
drew only a sample of 846 tweets from a sampling frame of 4,438 tweets in their eight-week analysis of diplomatic strategies used by 18 Western embassies in the Gulf countries. The scholars claimed that this enabled them to ensure there was no overrepresentation of any embassy (Strauß et al., 2015). These studies are two instances of the numerous studies which consider social media data and lack a reliable reference point for sampling purposes. The objective of this study is not to address this lacuna, but it does call for content analysis scholars to examine sampling issues related to social media data in order to enable researchers to draw a representative sample. The study adhered to the following criteria to organize tweets and status updates in a sampling frame:

(i) All types of tweets and status updates are considered, except videos.

(ii) A single tweet or status update embedded with multiple interactive elements such as images, gifs or videos is considered as a single unit regardless of the interactive elements.

(iii) Interactive elements (videos, images, gifs, etc.) in a tweet or a status update posted together in the form of an album are usually accompanied by a caption. For analysis, only the captions were considered. The interactive elements are not analyzed independently.

(iv) Content posted only in English is considered.

(v) A tweet is 140 characters, but there is no character limit for a status update. To equate the two units, only the first 140 characters of a status
update are considered for analysis. This was done so that agendas on
Facebook do not overpopulate the analysis resulting in a skewed sample.

(vi) Repetitive tweets and status updates such as, “Watch the initiative by
@MEAIndia to raise awareness abt dos & don'ts for Indians traveling
abroad” and “Get all your passport queries answered Subscribe to this list
of all Regional Passport Offices by @IndianDiplomacy” are eliminated.

**Twitter and Facebook.** This study specifically considers Twitter and Facebook
because these social networks allow the broadcasting of text-based posts that are, at
times, embedded with photographs and videos. Twitter and Facebook are convenient and
the most frequently used channels for communication by governments, political elites and
citizens (Gilboa, 2016). As compared to the huge investments required to set up
broadcasting channels such as television or radio, or to implement educational and visitor
exchange programs for diplomatic purposes, using social media for diplomacy is a cost-
effective mechanism and an easily accessible platform for both governments and the
public. Importantly, tweets and Facebook updates are regarded as traditional information
subsidies, which define issues for citizens and the media and enable governments to
control the interpretation of a phenomenon and influence public attitudes (Conway,
Kenski, & Wang, 2015). Thus, Twitter and Facebook are appropriate platforms to
investigate how a nation conducts public diplomacy.

Some scholars equated the two platforms—Twitter and Facebook—under the
larger realm of social networking sites, ignoring nuances that differentiate a
microblogging site such Twitter from a social networking site such as Facebook (Panek,
Nardis & Konrath, 2013). Twitter limits the content of an update to 140 characters but its unidirectional connections ensure that content is not hidden from users due to privacy settings (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This characterizes Twitter as one of the fastest information delivery platforms (Wang et al., 2017). Facebook does not have a character limit and allows conversations and engagement with followers that are likely to result into long-term relationships (Wang et al., 2017). Hence, on Facebook, it is likely that governments have an advantage to build multiple agendas in a single status update, clarify these agendas through conversations with users.

Along with differences, there are also numerous structural similarities between the two platforms. Both Twitter and Facebook allow users to create public or semi-public profiles, connect with individuals with whom they share common interests, and navigate these connections and those made by other users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Moreover, on both the platforms, users can share and comment on photos, videos and other content. Like Facebook, Twitter users can comment on content using the ‘reply’ feature. Additionally, on Twitter a ‘reply’ is represented with the @ symbol, whereas sharing of content is through the retweet feature. Users can also display their emotional involvement in the content by liking it. Specifically, on Facebook, users react to content through emoticons such as love, haha, wow, sad and angry. Overall, the features of like, reply or comment, retweet or share are termed differently on the two platforms, but they represent the same behavior. According to Cho, Schweickart and Haase (2014), the behaviors of “likes, shares, and comments represent different levels of engagement between an organization and publics, from low to moderate to high, respectively” (p. 566).
Additionally, Kim and Yang (2017) argue that liking content requires less cognition and commitment whereas commenting and sharing need additional actions that ask extra commitment and cognitive effort. As these social media behaviors are associated with different levels of motivation, one of the research questions examines agendas in terms of likes, shares/retweets and comments/replies.

**Data collection.** Data were collected from Twitter and Facebook using a set of software protocols called Application Program Interface (API), which allows access to data from any web-based software applications. An API can obtain large metadata from a user’s profile such as list of followers, list of users followed, number of tweets and profile photos among others (Janetzko, 2017). All the data were collected from the time the first tweet was ever posted on an Indian government-sponsored channel until April 31, 2017. Previous studies such as Sobel, Riffe and Hester (2016) have used Twitter API to collect data from Twitter, whereas Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) used Graph API to collect data from Facebook.

**Data extraction from Twitter.** From Twitter, data were collected using Twitter API that allows researchers to connect with Twitter servers to gather tweets. Attributes (or metadata) of tweets such as the text, images, videos, retweet count and favorite count can also be retrieved. Streaming API (Firehose) and Rest API— two APIs of Twitter—send requests to user accounts and retrieve archived and real-time tweets. Out of the two Twitter APIs, the study uses the Rest API because it gathers historical tweets from a user’s timeline. A computer engineer based in the United States—after being oriented on the purpose and scope of this study—was recruited to use Twitter API to collect tweets.
The software program Python was used to connect to the Twitter Rest API interface (version 1.1) to collect tweets from the accounts of the Indian government accounts on Twitter (see Table 1). The Twitter Rest API v1.1 allows for the most recent 3,200 tweets to be retrieved from any public Twitter feed. If an embassy has not published 3,200 tweets, it gathers all the tweets; otherwise it gathers the 3,200 most recent tweets (Sobel, et al., 2016). However, if the number of tweets exceeds 3,200, then the older tweets become irretrievable.

For the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh account, data were collected twice on February 1, 2017 (before the number of tweets reached the figure of 3,200) and on April 31, 2017 to ensure all the tweets were obtained. For the accounts of Indian Public Diplomacy and Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIIndia), which had more than 3,200 tweets, data were purchased from Gnip, a Twitter-owned firm that sells data (Riquelme, González-Cantergiani, 2016). Data from the other accounts were obtained using the services of a software engineer because the total number of tweets was less than 3,200. Data were collected in JSON files, then converted into excel format for convenience.

**Data extraction from Facebook.** Similar to the retrieval procedure with Twitter API, status updates from Facebook were collected using the Graph API. Data on Facebook are mostly private and it is illegal to access private content without the users’ permission. Prior to April 30, 2015, the Graph API provided access to the entire corpus, but Facebook now provides data from ‘friended’ users and public profiles such as celebrity pages, company profiles and open groups, which do not need permission through mechanisms such as ‘friend requests’. Data analysts using Graph API who
attempt to access private data without permission run the risk of having their web URL blocked by Facebook or may face a trial or pay fines for privacy violations (Facebook, 2017). There is no risk of violating privacy in this study since data examined here are from public pages. Moreover, unlike tweets, status updates do not become irretrievable once they reach 3,200. Hence, the Facebook Graph API was used for data extraction. The same computer engineer who collected data from Twitter, was recruited to use the Graph API to collect status updates from the accounts of Indian government accounts on Facebook (see Table 2).

**Coding category system.** This section provides a rationale for variables that are analyzed in this study. Variables such as source of the content (Twitter or Facebook), name of the Indian government-sponsored channel, unique identification (ID) of the tweet and status update, its link, date posted, and the text of the tweet or status updates were generated by the API. Hence, inter-coder reliability agreement between coders is not tested for these variables. Coders accessed content for coding purposes by clicking on the unique machine-generated link for each tweet and status update presented to them in the code sheet.

This study codes for variables such as type, nature of the tweets and status updates, and type of links, but these categories are not likely to have any implications on the theoretical underpinnings of the study. For variables such as ‘number of photographs’ or ‘number of videos’ a detailed operational definition is not provided because after clicking on a tweet and a status update’s link provided in the excel coding sheet, coders can simply tally these variables. The following are the variables that this study examines:
Type of tweet or status update. This variable categorizes the type of content into three items: original, retweet or share and third-party tweet or status update. It was developed to investigate the amount of original content, which the Indian government accounts publish on their profiles.

Number of retweets and author who is retweeted/shared. These two variables were analyzed independently. Retweeting and sharing implies forwarding of another user’s content as one’s own. Retweeting other users’ content is a way to increase one’s credibility (Park, Reber & Chon, 2016). It is observed that along with publishing their original content, the Indian government accounts retweet or share content from actors such as Indian politicians and government officials, Indian media, foreign officials and other Indian diplomacy accounts. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) state that “communication formulated by a president has different implications than one issued by a media celebrity or a social advocate, and people from different backgrounds, different governmental systems and different religions receive it differently” (p. 12). Hence, this category is developed to examine the actors, who built agendas for the Indian government accounts, which in turn build agendas for the social media users. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of items under this variable.

Nature of a tweet or status update. This category is adopted from Wohn and Na (2011), who analyze tweets based on whether the message is inbound (about oneself/the author) or outbound (not about oneself). The category is modified to suit the study. An additional item termed ‘mixed’ is included to categorize tweets and status updates which focus on both India and a foreign nation. Naaman, Boase and Lai (2010)
state that there are two types of users: first, those who publish content largely about themselves and second, those who converse and engage with their followers by providing informative content. Thus, the second type of users attract more followers. Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015) state that diplomacy accounts on social media aim to build long-term relations with their followers by engaging them in conversations. Thus, based on the above arguments, it is assumed that the nature of the content published by the Indian government accounts is likely to be outbound or mixed.

**Hashtags and @.** These categories were coded for their presence and absence. Hashtags and @ serve as tools that people use to interact with each other. Jenders, Kasneci and Naumann (2013) define hashtags as keywords that provide supplementary meaning to content and also help to categorize it so that users can easily find content that interests them and better understand it. The use of the @ symbol signifies conversation between two users (Wohn & Na, 2011). In their study, Honeycutt and Herring (2009) found that tweets embedded with the @ symbol were more interactive and also covered a wide range of themes compared to tweets which did not contain the symbol.

**Links.** The category was developed to include three items: no link, link to Indian sources and link to foreign sources. Hsu and Park (2011) suggest that in a political network, hyperlinks are conscious choices that politicians make to connect with actors who share and support their agendas. Including hyperlinks also allows users to provide credibility to the information they share which thereby enhances interactivity, retains followers and also encourages new users to follow a profile (Park, Reber & Chon, 2016).
**Number of photographs and videos.** The total number of photographs and videos for each tweet and status update was counted. When content is enhanced with photographs and videos, followers perceive the content as credible and useful (Park, Reber & Chon, 2016). Such elements also allow users to deliver information in an easy-to-understand format. Moreover, a large number of photographs also suggests that the user is a highly active social media user (Bakhshi, Shamma & Gilbert, 2014).

**User reactions.** The total number of shares, retweets, comments, replies, likes, reactions (haha, wow, sad, angry) and also the total number of photographs, videos are tallied independently for each tweet and status update. As stated earlier, a few scholars measured users’ level of engagement and motivation through likes, shares, comments (Cho, Schweickart & Haase, 2014; Kim & Yang, 2017). As compared to commenting and sharing, liking content requires less effort that makes it essential to understand how agendas differ in relation to these behaviors. Nonetheless, content embedded with interactive elements such as hyperlinks and framed rhetorically to generate answers from followers results in more likes and comments (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). These scholars also stated that users choosing what content to like and share is a result of a contagious influence that they have on each other (De Vries, Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). However, analyzing user engagement by examining user reactions on tweets and status updates is not within the scope of this study.

**Agendas.** are issues that governments prioritize to increase the importance of these issues for the public (Cobb, Ross & Ross, 1976). The categories under this variable were adopted from Garud-Patkar and Kalyango (2017) and were coded into politics,
economy/finance, culture, education, infrastructure, technology, healthcare/medicine, terrorism, corruption, poverty, defense, environment and other.

For detailed coding guidelines including the operational definitions, basic standards for coding tweets and status updates and a detailed description of each variable being measured, a comprehensive codebook is provided in Appendix A.

**Researchers’ training and inter-coder reliability.** For a research design to be reliable and replicable, it is important to achieve a high level of inter-coder reliability. According to Krippendorff (2013), a “research procedure is reliable when it responds to the same phenomena in the same way regardless of the circumstances of its implementation” (p. 267). For this study, three individuals with backgrounds in mass communication and journalism were recruited to test the inter-coder reliability and to code all data. These individuals were compensated for their time and efforts with gift cards worth $250 each.

Before coding began, coders underwent extensive training to ensure they understood the operational definitions. In the first meeting, the nature and objectives of the study were explained to the coders. This was followed by instructions on what will be coded, how much data is to be coded, and how long the coders can take to finish the process. The codebook and the code sheet were clearly explained. To clarify the conceptual definitions, the researcher coded some data with the coders until they comprehended the categories. During this training session, coders agreed that when there were two or more agendas in a single tweet or status update, instead of looking only for the keyword and the hashtags to determine the categorization, they would also consider
the overall dominant theme. For instance, in the tweet, “India's #health capital With its modern medical infrastructure, Chennai attracts about 40% of tourists for healthcare from abroad”, that the Indian Diplomacy channel published, two keywords ‘medical’ and ‘infrastructure’ suggest that the tweet can be categorized either under health/medicine or infrastructure. To avoid disagreement in this case, coders agreed to look at that larger theme in the tweet that India attracts tourists because of its medical facilities. Moreover, the hashtag ‘health’ suggests that the channel’s objective is to make the health agenda relevant. Hence, the tweet was classified under the health category.

After the initial training, coders independently coded 5% of the subsample (about 20 tweets and status updates) from each of the Indian-government accounts. The researcher calculated the inter-coder reliability and found that the coders lacked agreement on three categories (type of tweet or status update; agendas; nature of tweets or status update). To provide further clarification, a 120-minute practice session was held where the coders discussed the reasons for disagreement. The codebook was updated to include more keywords under each of the agendas. For the ‘type of tweet or status update’ variable, an example of a ‘third party’ tweet was added. Items under the ‘type of link’ variable were revised to: no link, link to Indian sources, link to non-Indian sources in order to reduce ambiguity.

After the second practice session, coders again independently coded 5% of the subsample, which included units not coded before. This time, three variables of ‘the type of tweet or status update’, ‘agendas’, and ‘nature of tweet or status update’ which lacked agreement were discussed during a 90-minute practice session. One coder was found to
use his own interpretation in analyzing the agendas. He was instructed to adhere to the codebook and was retrained on the variables. At the same time, the ‘number of gifs’ variable was discarded as none of the Indian-government accounts published gifs on their profiles.

A last training session was conducted. Coders again independently coded 5% of the subsample not coded before. An acceptable inter-coder reliability was found for all categories and coders finally began coding 10% of the subsample (total 320 tweets and 280 status updates). All sessions were conducted at a location convenient for the coders.

Krippendorff’s alpha was used to test inter-rater reliability because it can be used for any number of coders (not just two). It can also be used for different kinds of variables (nominal, ordinal, interval, ratio, and more), including incomplete or missing data (Krippendorff, 2013). Moreover, it can be used for large or small sample sizes and has no minimum. Krippendorff (2013) requires $\alpha \geq .800$ to make valid conclusions; $\alpha \geq .667$ is the lowest conceivable limit, which allows scholars to make tentative conclusions. The inter-rater reliability was as follows: word count (.92); type of tweet or status update (.71); author of the retweet or share (.74); agendas (.94); nature of the tweet or status update (.81); type of links (.81).

**Survey Methodology**

A cross-sectional survey of users on social media was conducted from June 15, 2017 to July 30, 2017. The goal was to survey 500 users who follow Indian government accounts on social media. Public opinion and attitudes were sought on constructs such as
engagement with Indian-government sponsored content on social media, online social relations, social media use (see Appendix C).

**Survey overview.** In this study, a ‘social media user’ is defined as an individual who is of 18 years or older and follows at least one of the Indian government accounts on Twitter or Facebook. These accounts include Indian Diplomacy, Ministry of External Affairs or Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and is also a citizen of these nations. A list of social media users who follow these accounts was obtained using Twitter API and Facebook Graph API. In addition, the present study only recruited ‘active’ social media users as defined by Naaman, Boase and Lai (2010) as those who:

(i) Have at least 10 followers and have posted at least 10 messages on either their Twitter or Facebook profiles.

(ii) Are tweeting/posting as individuals and not as organizations, institutions or marketers who have something to sell.

**Sampling.** The study uses two sampling procedures to gather appropriate data for analysis: systematic sampling and cluster sampling. Using systematic cluster sampling, the population of social media users who follow the Indian government accounts considered in this study was first divided into clusters, then random units were selected systematically from each cluster. Cluster sampling consists of random selection of groups or clusters, usually based on their geographical location from which units are drawn randomly (Webb, 2002). Social media users who follow the Indian government accounts on Twitter or Facebook were categorized into seven clusters based on their geographical
location as being either from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan or Sri Lanka. The geolocation was either retrieved through the APIs or was decided on the demographic details such as place of residence, employment, education, city of origin provided on user profiles.

The next step consisted of systematically sampling 500 respondents from each cluster. For instance, the total number of social media users in each cluster was divided by 500 and every nth user was selected in the sample. To choose a starting point, a random number generator freely available on the internet was used. The aim was to arrive at 75 completed questionnaires from each nation.

**Recruitment.** Respondents were recruited from Twitter and Facebook because the objective of the study was to examine the attitudes of users who follow the Indian government accounts on social media. Social media recruitment has been largely used in the field of health sciences to recruit inaccessible populations and provide them with “a transparent, anonymous and accessible method to participate in health research” (O’Connor, Jackson, Goldsmith, Skirton, 2014). For this study, profiles on Twitter and Facebook were created through which randomly selected respondents were followed on Twitter and added as friends on Facebook. This technique is based on Yuan, Bare, Johnson and Saberi (2014), who also used personal accounts to send direct messages with information about their study, and a link to the survey administered on social media.

During the initial days, recruitment texts were tweeted embedded with a shortened link to the survey and the respondent’s twitter handle. Such messages are public and can be viewed by all social media users on Twitter. However, this technique yielded only one
or two responses. Foreseeing the need to fasten the recruitment process, targeted respondents received private direct messages with the recruitment text. A direct message is a private conversation between the sender and the receiver. Moreover, it is not restricted to a 140-character limit which provides more space to explicate the study and answer respondents’ questions instantly. Likewise, on Facebook, direct messages sent to users without adding them as friends did not receive any responses during the initial days. A slow response was not due to the respondents’ lack of motivation but Facebook’s set up which sends direct messages to ‘the other’ inbox and does not notify users about the delivery of such messages (Johnson, 2015). As a result, targeted respondents were added as friends and then sent recruitment texts through direct messages.

When the respondents’ profile-setting blocked direct messages, the researcher resorted to the initial technique on Twitter of tweeting the recruitment text with a shortened survey link to the respondents; on Facebook message was posted directly to respondents’ walls. After a couple of days, reminders were sent to respondents who had agreed to, but not yet completed the survey.

Although direct messages allowed respondents to get their queries answered instantly, there were a number of challenges faced during data collection. For example, a few respondents refused to participate because of lack of trust. Others were concerned about the link’s validity and feared that clicking the link would result in breach of computer security. In such cases, the respondents were assured that the link was authentic and was affiliated to the Ohio University servers.
Using an online survey was both a practical and appropriate decision for several reasons:

(i) Social media recruitment through personal direct message is a free-of-cost technique and allows for large scale recruitment. Thus, through electronic means social media users in different countries were included without being constrained by a budget for data collection.

(ii) Social media recruitment is likely to provide a more diverse sample because hard-to-reach respondents can be easily contacted.

(iii) On Facebook, a recruitment message is more likely to be seen by a user for several days after it is posted. As a result, it is likely that the message serves as reminder for the respondent to answer the survey.

**Pre-test and instrumentation.** Before the questionnaire was administered, it was pretested on 14 respondents from Afghanistan (n=2), Bangladesh (n=2), India (n=2), Nepal (n=4), Pakistan (n=2) and Sri Lanka (n=2). There is a likelihood that respondents from different countries interpret questions differently. Therefore, a pilot study was conducted on respondents selected from different countries to ensure multinational validity (Kalyango, et al., 2017). These respondents, who were sent the survey link via social media, were known to the researcher. Personal requests were made to them to answer the survey and identify questions, answer choices, or statements that were ambiguous or difficult to comprehend. After in-depth discussions with the respondents, several questions and choices were rephrased to enhance their clarity. For instance, respondents stated that in the question that asked them to rate the importance of agendas
on a scale of 1 to 7, they did not understand the context in which the importance was to be rated. To ensure that issue importance is considered at an individual level, the words ‘for your socio-economic development’ were added. Thus, the question read: From the list below, rate on a scale from 1 = extremely unimportant through 7 = extremely important how important or unimportant each issue is for your socio-economic development. Likewise, in a few questions the ordinal categories associated with the parameter ‘do not wish to answer’ were discarded.

The final version of the survey was administered through Qualtrics, the professional online survey software. Respondents from the seven South Asian countries answered the same questionnaire resulting in a collective measurement of their attitudes about India’s reputation. To encourage participation, the study offered respondents a chance to participate in a lucky draw and win 10 gift cards worth $5 each. The survey instrument was designed to examine each respondent’s (i) engagement with Indian-government sponsored content; (ii) online social relations with India; (iii) sources of information about India; (iv) rating of India’s reputation; (v) other demographic variables (e.g.: age, education; see Appendix C). Each of these constructs are discussed below:

**Engagement with the Indian government content.** Respondents indicate all the Indian government accounts that they follow on social media. They also indicate the extent to which they engaged in 14 activities (e.g. “I read their tweets”) on these accounts. This is measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate greater engagement. (Cronbach alpha=.942).
**Information sources.** Three constructs are measured under this: Indian media sources, media sources originating from the home country and social media sources. Under each construct, respondents rate the extent to which they receive information about India from each source listed. For instance, under the construct Indian media sources items included Indian movies, Indian newspapers, Indian magazines and India television news channels among others. Responses are measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate greater usage. (Cronbach alpha=.720).

**Agendas of social media users.** Respondents rated 14 issues (politics, economy, culture, education, infrastructure, health, terrorism, regional conflicts, corruption, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, defense, other) that they considered important for their socio-economic development on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *extremely unimportant* through 7 = *extremely important*. Higher scores indicate greater importance. (Cronbach alpha=.864).

**Online social relations.** This construct was adopted from Seo (2010), who measures online social relations in terms of network size and network time. Online network size was measured by asking respondents approximately how many users do they follow on Twitter and Facebook, how many users follow them and how many Indians are they connected with on different types of social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat). The measure was modified to include current popular sites of Instagram, Pinterest, WhatsApp and Snapchat. However, unlike Seo (2010), network time was measured by asking
respondents to rate the amount of time they spend on communicating with Indians. This was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = never to 7 = all the time. (Cronbach alpha = .855).

**Reputation index.** To measure how social media users in South Asia rate the reputation of India, measures from the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (Passow et al., 2005) are adopted. Country reputation is measured on five aspects: (i) emotional appeal (ii) cultural appeal (iii) economic appeal, (iii) political appeal and (v) regional appeal. The index is modified to include ‘regional appeal’ as a measure of India’s position in South Asia. Respondents indicated on a seven-point scale how much they agree or disagree with the following 20 items:

*Emotional appeal (4 items).* (a) I feel good about India; (b) I like India; (c) I admire India; (d) I trust India. (Cronbach alpha = .911).

*Cultural appeal (4 items).* (a) India’s culture is distinct; (b) India’s culture is appealing; (c) India’s history is rich; (d) India’s culture is diverse. (Cronbach alpha = .767).

*Economic appeal (4 items).* (a) India’s infrastructure is strong; (b) India is a promising place to start a business; (c) India’s industrial sector is well-developed; (d) India produces quality products. (Cronbach alpha = .716).

*Political appeal (4 items).* (a) India’s democratic institutions are strong; (b) India maintains good international relations; (c) India’s politicians are non-corrupt; (d) Indian politicians follow rule of law. (Cronbach alpha = .780).
Regional appeal (4 items). (a) India works for regional cooperation in South Asia; (b) India’s foreign policy is favorable towards South Asia; (c) India works for peace in South Asia; (d) India works to unite South Asia. (Cronbach alpha= .940).

Educational status and sociodemographic characteristics. To estimate the respondents’ level of education they were asked to indicate the highest level of education completed. The occupation and employment status of respondents is also measured. Other demographic measures include age, nationality, place of residence, and gender.
Chapter 7: Results

The study examined mediated public diplomacy of India on social media. It analyzed the content that the Indian government publishes on its 15 Twitter and Facebook accounts. These accounts include the Ministry of External Affairs, *Indian Diplomacy* and Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Additionally, social media users (followers of the 15 Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook) were surveyed to examine factors of engagement on social media, information sources and online social relations that predict national reputation of India on social media.

The aim was to investigate the agendas that the Indian government builds via its 15 accounts and the reputation it has among the social media users. The agendas examined included politics, economy/finance, education, terrorism, and health and medicine among others. A rank-order correlation was also examined between the Indian government agendas and the social media users’ agendas. Engagement of the social media users on the 15 Indian government accounts predicting national reputation on social media was also measured. Examined here were also factors such as social media users’ online social relations with Indians and the type of sources from which they get information about India.

This chapter first presents the results of the content analysis conducted to investigate the agendas and then reports the survey results. To analyze the relationship between agendas, chi-squares and rank-order correlations are used. To test relationships
between the constructs measured in the survey, the study used regression analysis and correlations.

In summary, the study demonstrates an agenda-building linkage: there is a relationship between the Indian government agendas and agendas of social media users. Moreover, factors of engagement on social media, information sources (home) and information sources (social media) along with the level of education strongly the predict national reputation for India.

Content Analysis

Descriptive data. A total of 6,000 tweets and status updates were analyzed from 15 Indian government accounts. This consisted of 3,200 tweets; 400 tweets each from the accounts of the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Diplomacy and Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The data also consisted of 2,800 status updates comprising 400 status updates each from the accounts of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Equal sample sizes were drawn to facilitate comparisons between the 15 Indian government accounts. Drawing equal sample sizes of 400 units from each Indian government accounts is likely to result in the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of an Indian government account.

Type of tweet or status update and author who is retweeted/shared. Tweets and status updates were classified into three categories: original tweets, retweets or shares, and third-party tweets or status updates. This category examined the amount of original content published on the Indian government accounts. Out of the 3,200 tweets that the
Indian government published on its accounts, retweets \((n = 1,653)\) were more than the original tweets \((n = 1,544)\). Third-party tweets were only 3.

Despite a large number of retweets, 87.90% \((n = 1,453)\) of the total retweets \((n = 1,653)\) were tweets of Indian sources. These retweets included 801 tweets of Indian politicians, followed by 153 tweets of the Indian media. Tweets of the Ministry of External Affairs \((n = 314)\), the Indian Diplomacy \((n = 173)\) account, and the Indian embassies such as India in Nepal \((n = 4)\), India in Afghanistan \((n = 3)\), India in Bangladesh \((n = 3)\) were also retweeted. One tweet each of the Indian embassy in Pakistan and Indian embassy in Sri Lanka was retweeted. The remaining 200 retweets included tweets of foreign politicians \((n = 105)\), foreign media \((n = 52)\) and ‘other’ \((n = 43)\) sources.

In contrast, on Facebook, the Indian government published more original statuses rather than sharing someone’s status. Out of the 2,800 Facebook status updates, the number of original status updates \((n = 1,969)\) was more than the status updates that were shared \((n = 689)\). Furthermore, out of the 689 shares, 587 shares were status updates of Indian sources. The remaining 102 shares were status updates of foreign politicians \((n = 35)\), foreign media \((n = 36)\) and ‘other’ \((n = 31)\) sources.

Particularly, the 689 shared status updates from Indian sources included 349 status updates of the Indian politicians, 155 updates of the Ministry of External Affairs, 54 of the Indian media. Also, status updates of the Indian embassies in Afghanistan \((n = 9)\), Bangladesh \((n = 9)\), Bhutan \((n = 3)\), Maldives \((n = 2)\), Nepal \((n = 3)\) and Sri Lanka \((n = 3)\) were also shared.
**Nature of a tweet or status update.** Frequencies show that the Indian government publishes more inbound content or content about itself \((n = 3,739; 62.31\%)\) than outbound content (about a foreign nation) \((n = 678, 11.3\%)\). Content that was ‘mixed’ was also more than outbound content. A similar trend is seen on Twitter and Facebook. On Twitter, inbound (about India) tweets were 2,116 compared to only 257 outbound (about a foreign nation) tweets and 826 mixed tweets. Out of the 2,800 Facebook updates, 1,623 were inbound (about India), 421 were outbound (about a foreign nation) and 756 tweets were mixed.

**Hashtags and @.** Hashtags and @ serve as tools that people use to interact with each other. They were coded for their presence and absence. On Twitter, out of the total 3,200 tweets, only 34.7\% \((n = 1,110)\) of the tweets had at least one hashtag compared to 65.3\% \((n = 2,090)\) that did not have a hashtag. The @ symbol was present in only 33.9\% of the tweets, whereas 66.1\% of the tweets did not have the @ symbol. Likewise, on Facebook, out of the 2,800 status updates, only 13.3\% \((n = 389)\) contained a hashtag, whereas 84.8\% \((n = 2,375)\) status updates did not contain a hashtag. The @ symbol was also used in only 4.4\% \((n = 132)\) status updates compared to 95.5\% updates that did not contain a @ symbol.

**Hyperlinks.** The tweets and status updates were coded for: no link, link to Indian sources and link to foreign sources. On Twitter, a large proportion of tweets did not have any link \((78.1\%, n = 2,498)\), whereas 613 \((19.2\%)\) tweets had hyperlinks directing to Indian sources. Only 89 \((2.8\%)\) tweets had hyperlinks directing to foreign sources. On Facebook, 65.6\% \((n = 1,836)\) status updates did not have an hyperlink, 30\% \((n = 839)\)
contained an hyperlink to an Indian source and only 4.4% \((n = 125)\) contained hyperlinks directing to foreign sources.

**Number of photographs and videos.** The total number of photographs and videos for each tweet and status update was recorded. On Twitter, there were a total of 4,013 photographs \((M = 1.25, SD = 1.26)\), while the total number of videos were only 93 \((M = .03, SD = .277)\). The average photograph per status update was four. The total number of photographs on Facebook were 12,047 \((M = 4.30, SD = 20.03)\) and videos were 147 \((M = .50, SD = .223)\).

**Agendas on social media.** Agendas were analyzed into 14 conceptual categories outlined below in the data frequencies and distributions (Table 3). Frequencies and percentages were used to determine the ranking of the agendas.

Data show that politics is the top-ranking agenda that the Indian government builds on social media \((n = 2,333)\). Politics received twice the prominence than the next top two agendas of culture \((27.41\%, n = 1,645)\) and economy/finance \((10.53\%, n = 632)\). Politics accounted for 38.8% of all the agendas on social media. Moreover, politics was also the top-ranked agenda on both Twitter and Facebook. The others that ranked among the top five prominent agendas were education at 4.96% \((n = 298)\) and infrastructure at 3.88% \((n = 233)\). Except for education, agendas of culture, economy/finance, and infrastructure were ranked in the top five on both Twitter and Facebook. Education with 196 mentions \((65.8\%)\) was ranked in the top five agendas only on Facebook, whereas on Twitter, technology \((60.8\%, n = 121)\) was among the top five agendas. Corruption
(0.083%, \(n = 5\)) and poverty (0.06%, \(n = 4\)) had the least mentions on social media. Table 3 shows the frequencies of other agendas examined in this study.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th></th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(f)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>1,334</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>2,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/Finance</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>39.2</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Medicine</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(rs (14) = .884, p < .001\)

Meanwhile, the frequency distribution for Twitter and Facebook showed that the terrorism agenda on Twitter at 75.8% \((n = 94)\) was three times higher than on Facebook at 24.2% \((n = 30)\). However, defense at 2.71% \((n = 163)\) was not among the top-ranked...
agendas on either Twitter or Facebook. A Spearman’s rank-order correlation was run to determine the relationship between agendas on Twitter and agendas on Facebook. Analysis shows there was a strong, positive correlation between agendas on Twitter ($M = 228.57, SD = 381.12$) and agendas on Facebook ($M = 200, SD = 315.34$), which was statistically significant, $rs (14) = .884, p < .001$.

**Agendas on Twitter.** Eight accounts of the Indian government were considered on Twitter that included the Ministry of External Affairs, *Indian Diplomacy* and the Indian embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Frequency data indicate that the Indian government is consistent on agendas that it builds across all its Twitter accounts. Thus, the agendas of politics, culture and economy/finance received the top prominence across all the Indian government Twitter accounts. Politics had the topmost mentions on the accounts of the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan (11.4%, $n = 153$), the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh (12.5%, $n = 168$), the Indian Embassy in Maldives (12.4%, $n = 166$), the Indian Embassy in Nepal (13.1%, $n = 176$), the Indian Embassy in Pakistan (12.5%, $n = 168$), and the Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka (13.5%, $n = 181$) and the Ministry of External Affairs (16.9%, $n = 226$). These accounts also gave prominence to the culture category that received the second highest frequency. Likewise, the third top-ranked agenda in terms of frequencies across all the accounts was economy/finance.

Meanwhile, on the *Indian Diplomacy* account, issues related to culture ($n = 123; 15\%$) received the highest frequency whereas the agenda of politics ($n = 96; 7.19\%$) had the second highest followed by economy/finance ($n = 51, 15.74\%$). A Spearman’s rank-
order correlation was run to determine the relationship between agendas across the eight Twitter accounts. Analysis shows an insignificant and negative correlation between agendas across the eight Twitter accounts of the Indian government, $rs (3,200) = -0.028$, $p > .05$.

**Agendas on Facebook.** The study examined Facebook status updates published on the seven Indian government accounts of the embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, and the Ministry of External Affairs.

Unlike Twitter, the top agendas across the Facebook accounts were not similar. Culture received the highest prominence only on the accounts of the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan (18.7%, $n = 155$) and the Indian Embassy in Bhutan (12.8%, $n = 106$). Also on these accounts, the second prominent agenda in terms of frequencies recorded in these data was politics. On the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan, politics received 98 mentions (9.8%) whereas, on the Indian Embassy in Bhutan it received 99 mentions (9.9%). Education (18.3%, $n = 36$) was ranked the third prominent agenda on the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan whereas, on the Indian Embassy in Bhutan, the third top agenda was economy/finance with a frequency of 67 (21.7%).

Politics was ranked the top agenda on the Facebook accounts of the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh (18.1%, $n = 181$), the Indian Embassy in Maldives (18.4%, $n = 184$), the Indian Embassy in Nepal (14.01%, $n = 140$), the Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka (16.4%, $n = 164$), and the Ministry of External Affairs (13.3%, $n = 133$). In terms of frequencies, culture received the second highest prominence on the embassies in Bangladesh (12.8%, $n = 106$), Maldives (14.2%, $n = 118$), Nepal (13.6%, $n = 113$), Sri
Lanka (12.8%, \(n = 128\)) and on the account of the Ministry of External Affairs (12.3%, \(n = 102\)).

The agendas that ranked third were not the same across the seven Facebook accounts. Data show the third ranked agenda in terms of frequencies for the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh was infrastructure (16.5%, \(n = 23\)); for the Indian Embassy in Maldives was health and medicine (47.8%, \(n = 22\)); for the Indian embassies in Nepal (21.7%, \(n = 67\)) and Sri Lanka (15.2%, \(n = 47\)) and the Ministry of External Affairs 24.02% (\(n = 74\)) was economy/finance. A Spearman’s rank-order correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between agendas across the seven Facebook accounts. Analysis shows a significant and positive correlation between agendas across the eight Facebook accounts of the Indian government, \(rs (2,800) = -.077, p < .001\).

Agendas in relation to the number of likes/favorites, replies/comments and shares/retweets. RQ1 examined the agendas that are prominent in relation to the likes/favorites, replies/comments and shares/retweets. The independent variable was the type of agendas. The dependent variables were the total number of likes/favorites, comments and shares/retweets. None of the dependent variables followed a normal distribution. As a result, the Kruskal-Wallis Test, a non-parametric technique, was used to answer RQ1.

On Twitter, user reactions to agendas as they relate to the favorites, retweets and replies were recorded. The 3,200 tweets examined generated a total of 1,330,524 reactions (\(M = 415.79, SD = 2149.23\)). In relation to the total favorites, the terrorism agenda with a mean rank of 2,253.34 was the most prominent. It generated a total of
97,539 favorite reactions. Environment, which was the second prominent agenda, with a mean rank of 1852.10, generated 14,719 favorite reactions and was followed by infrastructure with a mean rank of 1,753.83 and 38,552 favorites.

A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to evaluate differences among the agendas on Twitter with the number of favorites as a dependent variable. Results indicate that there were statistically significant differences among agendas of the Indian government on Twitter, $\chi^2 (13) = 150.06, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons of infrastructure and terrorism show significant differences in relation to the favorites ($p = .019$). However, there were no significant differences in relation to the favorites between environment and infrastructure ($p > .05$), and environment and terrorism ($p > .05$).

The 3,200 tweets were retweeted a total of 621,293 times ($M = 194.15, SD = 820.68$). Out of these, again the terrorism agenda, with a mean rank of 2,321.94 (retweeted 48,302 times) was the most prominent. This was followed by environment with a mean rank of 1,934.14 (retweeted 9,478 times) and defense with a mean rank of 1,750.55 (retweeted 16,008 times). A Kruskal-Wallis Test conducted to evaluate differences among the agendas of the Indian government on Twitter in relation to the number of retweets indicates statistically significant differences, $\chi^2 (13) = 173.45, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons of the terrorism and defense agendas show significant differences in relation to each agenda’s retweets ($p < .001$). However, the differences in relation to the retweets between environment and defense ($p > .05$) as well as environment and terrorism ($p > .05$) were not significant.
In relation to the replies \((n = 91,931, M = 28.73, SD = 154.56)\) on Twitter, the three prominent agendas were terrorism with a mean rank of 2,303.07 (8,867 replies), environment with a mean rank of 1,700.23 (91 replies) and infrastructure with a mean rank of 1,699.20 (94 replies). A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to evaluate differences among the agendas on Twitter accounts in relation to the replies (dependent variable). Results indicate statistically significant differences between the Twitter agendas of the Indian government in relation to the replies, \(\chi^2 (13) = 143.42, p < .001\). Pairwise comparisons of the environment and terrorism agendas \((p < .001)\) as well as infrastructure and terrorism \((p < .001)\) show significant differences in relation to each agenda’s replies. However, the difference in the relation to the replies between environment and infrastructure \((p > .05)\) was not significant.

User reactions to agendas in relation to the likes, shares, and comments were recorded on Facebook. The 2,800 Facebook status updates generated a total of 431,094 likes \((M = 153.84, SD = 614.23)\). Environment with a mean rank of 2,212.47 and total likes of 9,437 was the top agenda followed by infrastructure with a mean rank of 1,679.71 (18,028 likes) and terrorism with a mean rank of 1,645.93 (3,532 likes). A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to evaluate differences among the Facebook agendas (independent variable) and the number of likes (dependent variable). Results indicate statistically significant differences among the Indian government agendas on Facebook in relation to the number of likes, \(\chi^2 (13) = 159.51, p < .001\). Pairwise comparisons of environment and infrastructure agendas show significant differences in relation to each agendas’ likes \((p = .029)\). However, the differences in relation to the likes between
environment and terrorism ($p > .05$) as well as terrorism and infrastructure were not significant ($p > .05$).

Facebook agendas were shared 22,048 times ($M = 9.62, SD = 44.59$). In relation to the shares, the top three agendas were environment with a mean rank of 2,252.71 (1,003 shares) followed by corruption with a mean rank of 2,191.50 (23 shares), and health and medicine with a mean rank of 1,660.88 (358 shares). A Kruskal-Wallis Test conducted to evaluate differences among the Facebook agendas (independent variable) and the number of shares (dependent variable) shows statistically significant differences, $\chi^2 (13) = 124.91, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons show no significant differences in relation to the shares between environment and corruption ($p > .05$) as well as corruption and ‘health and medicine’ ($p > .05$). However, the differences in relation to the shares between environment and ‘health and medicine’ were significant ($p = .045$).

In contrast to the prominent agendas ranked in relation to the likes and shares, the top three agendas in relation to the comments were environment with a mean rank of 1,761.72 (155 comments), infrastructure with a mean rank of 1,658.21 (3,180 comments) and poverty with a mean rank of 1,643.33 and 91 comments. Overall, the Facebook agendas generated 43,431 comments ($M = 15.51, SD = 66.95$). A Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to evaluate the differences among the Facebook agendas (independent variable) and the number of comments (dependent variable). Results indicate statistically significant differences between the agendas that the Indian government builds on Facebook in relation to the comments, $\chi^2 (13) = 59.77, p < .001$. Pairwise comparisons of
agendas show that there were no significant differences in relation to the comments between the top three agendas ($p > .05$).

**Rank-order correlations.** RQ2 asked about the rank order of agendas prominent on the Indian government’s social media accounts compared to agendas that users rank prominently on social media. The ranking of the agendas that the Indian government builds on social media was analyzed in the previous section. Table 3 depicts the rank order of all the Indian government agendas on social media, with politics, culture and economy/finance, ranking as the top three agendas, $r_s (6,000) = .038$, $p = .003$.

To examine perceptions of the agendas measured in the Twitter and Facebook content analysis on the social media users, the study draws from the survey data (results presented in subsequent sub-section) to conduct a rank-order correlation between two models. The first model, outlined in the previous subsection of the content analysis is rank-ordered with the second model from the survey results data. The number of social media users surveyed per country was very small. Hence, the social media users’ agendas from the seven neighboring nations were not examined country-wise with the Indian government agendas, but were considered holistically.

In the second model, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the agendas mentioned in Table 3 are important for their socio-economic development (second model). Respondents ranked the issues on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = extremely unimportant through 7 = extremely important. Higher scores indicated greater importance. The mean scores for each of the issues were considered. Survey data indicate that for social media users, the agendas that ranked high were
education ($M = 6.36, SD = 1.22$), followed by health and medicine ($M = 6.19, SD = 1.33$), environment ($M = 6.05, SD = 1.33$), economy/finance ($M = 6.04, SD = 1.27$) and infrastructure ($M = 5.98, SD = 1.26$) (see Table 4). Thus, a few agendas—economy/finance and infrastructure—that were the top agendas for social media users (second model/survey) were also among the top agendas that the Indian government built on its social media accounts (first model/content analysis). However, the two top agendas of the Indian government—politics and culture—were not the same as that of the social media users. Thus, not all the Indian government agendas and the social media users agendas correlated with each other.

Despite this, based on a rank order of the prominent agendas between the first (content analysis) and second (survey) models, the results indicate an agenda-building function between the Indian government’s top agendas and the social media users’ perceived top agendas. The strength of the relationship between the Indian government agendas measured in the first model and the perceived top users’ agendas in the second model was significant, $rs (14) = .543, p = .04$. See Table 4.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agendas</th>
<th>Frequency of the Indian Government Agendas on Social Media</th>
<th>Mean score of the perceived agendas of social media users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2,333</td>
<td>5.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy/finance</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>6.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Medicine</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defense</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Model 1 considers the Indian government agendas, whereas model 2 considers agendas of social media users. A significant relationship between model 1 and model 2 \( r_s (14) = .543, p = .04 \), indicates agenda-building function.

Cross-Sectional Analysis of the Survey

A total of 650 social media users participated in the survey. After the initial screening, it was found that 216 cases made no contribution to the theory. As a result, these cases were eliminated. In addition, 47 cases were eliminated because these respondents did not indicate if they followed any of the Indian government accounts on social media. Thus, a total of 387 responses were considered in the analysis.

Before the objectives of the study are addressed, a description of the population sample which represents the characteristics of the social media users who follow the Indian government accounts considered in this study is presented. The social media users
first reported about their demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education and employment status. Then, they were asked to rate the statements that measured their perceived engagement with the Indian government accounts, the strength of their online social relations with Indians, the sources from which they get information about India, and the reputation of India.

**Demographic characteristics of respondents.** Out of the 387 respondents considered in the analysis, Afghan citizens were 18.9% \((n = 73)\), Bangladeshi citizens were 18.3% \((n = 70)\), Bhutanese citizens, 16.8% \((n = 65)\), Nepali citizens were 16.5% \((n = 64)\), Pakistani citizens were 17.3% \((n = 67)\) and Sri Lankan citizens were 12.1% \((n = 47)\). Analysis of the gender of the respondents revealed an unequal distribution of males and females. The number of males was substantially larger than that of females with males accounting for 82.9% \((n = 301)\) of the respondents and females accounting for only 17.1% \((n = 62)\).

The gender of the respondents across the South Asian nations also shows unequal distribution with males accounting for more than 75% of the respondents among the citizens of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Pakistan. One exception where the percentage of males was not above 75% was Sri Lanka. In the Sri Lankan sample, males were 63.8% \((n = 30)\) and females were 31.9% \((n = 15)\). Among the Afghan citizens, 88.7% \((n = 63)\) were males and 7% \((n = 5)\) were females. Among the Bangladeshi citizens, 75.7% \((n = 53)\) were males and 20% \((n = 14)\) were females whereas among the Bhutanese citizens, 83.1% \((n = 54)\) were males and 12.3% \((n = 8)\) were females. Similarly, among the Nepali citizens, 81.7% \((n = 49)\) were males and 13.3% \((n
were females while among the Pakistani citizens, 76.6% \((n = 52)\) were males and 17.9% \((n = 12)\) were females.

In terms of age, respondents were mainly between the age of 19 and 39 years old. A majority of the respondents reported that they were in the 19-29 age group (69.1%, \(n = 264\)) and in the 30-39 age group (23%, \(n = 88\)). Fifteen respondents (3.9%) were in the 40-49 age-group, eight (2.1%) were in the 50-59 age group and 3 (0.8%) were in the 60-69 age group. There were no respondents who were 70 years or older.

The respondents were also asked to report the highest level of education completed. Results show that a majority of the respondents (76.4%, \(n = 292\)) had completed a bachelor’s (44.5%, \(n = 170\)) and a master’s degree (\(n = 31.9%, 122\)). Forty-nine respondents (12.8%) had attained higher secondary education, 16 (4.2%) had completed a vocational diploma and only 5 (1.3%) had attained education up to secondary school. Nobody reported lack of any formal education.

Lastly, respondents were asked about their employment status and it was found that 70.9% \((n = 292)\) were employed which included 58.7% \((n = 227)\) who were employed full-time, 10.9% \((n = 42)\) who were employed part-time and 1.3% \((n = 5)\) who were employed but not working. Only one (0.3%) respondent was retired and 76 (20.5%) were not employed. Thus, demographic characteristics show that a majority of the respondents are young, have acquired higher education and employed full-time.

**Descriptive statistics for variables and constructs.** Along with demographic questions, respondents were asked to report about their use of social media and rate their engagement with the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook. Respondents
also answered questions about their online relationship with Indians and rated the extent to which they get information about India from varied sources.

**Social media usage.** On the use of social media, respondents were asked about the social networking sites they use and the Indian government accounts they follow on Twitter and Facebook.

Respondents showed a preference for Facebook over Twitter. Out of the 347 respondents, 62% \((n = 215)\) reported that they use only Facebook and only 2.3% or eight respondents use only Twitter. Moreover, the percentage of respondents who use both Twitter and Facebook was also small (35.7%, \(n = 124\)). A chi-square test of independence indicated that there were significant differences in respondents’ use of social media, \(X^2 (10, N = 347) = 46.76, p < .001\). Table 5 shows percentage and the total number of respondents using social media across six South Asian countries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Only Twitter</th>
<th>Only Facebook</th>
<th>Twitter &amp; Facebook</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1.61 % (1)</td>
<td>58.06 % (36)</td>
<td>40.32 % (25)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65.62 % (42)</td>
<td>34.37 % (22)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>1.7 % (1)</td>
<td>85.71 % (48)</td>
<td>12.5 % (7)</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>62.71 % (37)</td>
<td>37.28 % (22)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>9.67 % (6)</td>
<td>35.48 % (22)</td>
<td>54.83 % (34)</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>68.18 % (30)</td>
<td>31.81 % (14)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(X^2 (10, N = 347) = 46.76, p < .001\); parentheses include frequencies

Respondents reported about all the Indian government accounts that they follow on Twitter and Facebook. On Twitter, only two respondents (50%) reported that they
follow the *Indian Diplomacy* account; the Indian Ministry of External Affairs account was followed by only one person (25%) and the account of the Indian Embassy in Bhutan was followed by one person (25%). A chi-square test of independence indicated that there were no significant differences among the respondents and their following of the Indian government accounts on Twitter, $\chi^2 (4, N = 4) = 5, p = .287$.

On Facebook, respondents reported that they followed the Indian embassies in Afghanistan (15.4%, $n = 59$), Bangladesh (20.8%, $n = 80$), Bhutan (17.2%, $n = 66$), Maldives (3.6%, $n = 14$), Nepal (8.1%, $n = 31$), Sri Lanka (19.8%, $n = 76$), and the Ministry of External Affairs (12.8%, $n = 49$) and other accounts (0.8%, $n = 3$). Respondents reported that the ‘other’ Indian government accounts that they follow are that of the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi, the external affairs minister Sushma Swaraj, High Commission of India in Chittagong, and the Council of India in Herat, Afghanistan. A chi-square test of independence indicated that there were significant differences in the respondents and their following of Indian government accounts on Facebook, $\chi^2 (40, N = 384) = 517.28, p < .001$.

**Reputation index.** The reputation of India among social media users was measured using the Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (Passow et al., 2005). Table 6 shows that respondents’ overall rating of the reputation of India is slightly high ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 1.57$). Respondents evaluated India most positively on the cultural appeal ($M = 5.86$, $SD = 1.35$) that included items specifically relating to India’s culture and history.

The second and third most positively rated aspects were the emotional appeal ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.69$) and the economic appeal ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.19$). The emotional appeal
construct measured how much the respondents liked and trusted India whereas the 
economic appeal asked whether India had a good infrastructure, was a good place to start 
a business, produced quality products and if it had a well-developed industrial sector. 

Although cultural, economic and emotional appeals were rated high, scores on the 
leadership/political appeal ($M = 3.72, SD = 1.64$) and the regional appeal ($M = 3.99, SD = 
1.83$) about India were somewhat low. Specifically, respondents rated statements about 
Indian politicians very low. They did not agree that Indian politicians were non-corrupt 
($M = 2.46, SD = 1.51$) and that Indian politicians ‘follow rule of law’ ($M = 3.10, SD = 
1.62$).
Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for National Reputation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “feel good” about India</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>4.80</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “like” India</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “admire” India</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I “trust” India</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s culture is “distinct”</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s culture is “appealing”</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s culture is “diverse”</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s history is “rich”</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>5.86</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s “infrastructure is strong”</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India produces “quality products”</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India is a “promising place to start a business”</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s “industrial sector is well developed”</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s democratic institutions are strong</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India promotes “international relations”</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian “politicians are non-corrupt”</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian politicians “follow rule of law”</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Appeal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India works for “regional cooperation” in South Asia</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India’s “foreign policy is favorable” towards South Asia</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India works for “peace” in South Asia</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India works to “unite” South Asia</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total reputation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale. High scores indicated higher agreement. All items contribute significantly to total reputation at 0.01 level (two-tailed)

**Engagement.** To measure the level of engagement on the Indian government accounts, respondents were asked to rate 14 activities (e.g. “I read their tweets”) on a
seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Results show that on Twitter, respondents were highly engaged in discussions with other Twitter followers ($n = 6, M = 4.50, SD = 1.51$), followed by commenting on the tweets of the Indian government accounts ($n = 6, M = 4.33, SD = 1.50$) and watching videos posted by the Indian government accounts ($n = 6, M = 4.33, SD = 1.50$). On Facebook, respondents were highly engaged in watching photos ($n = 351, M = 4.39, SD = 1.75$) and liking the photos ($n = 351, M = 4.22, SD = 1.81$) along with reading the status updates of the Indian government accounts ($n = 363, M = 4.28, SD = 1.73$). See Table 7 and 8 detailing levels of engagement with other activities of social media users on the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook respectively.
### Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Respondents’ Engagement with the Indian Government on Twitter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read their tweets</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch their photos</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch their videos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their tweets</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their photos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their videos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I retweet their tweets</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.96*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I retweet their photos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I retweet their videos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I favorite their tweets</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I favorite their photos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I favorite their videos</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with other followers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with the account owners</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Twitter engagement** 3.78 1.61

Note: Engagement was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate greater engagement. Items with *p* = 0.05 (two-tailed) and **p** = 0.01 (two-tailed) contribute significantly to total Twitter engagement.
Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for Respondents’ Engagement with the Indian Government on Facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read their status updates</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch their photos</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I watch their videos</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their status updates</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their photos</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I comment on their videos</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share their status updates</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share their photos</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share their videos</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like their status updates</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like their photos</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like their videos</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with other followers</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with the account owners</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Facebook engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Engagement was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Higher scores indicate greater engagement. All items contribute significantly to total Facebook engagement at 0.01 level (two-tailed)

**Information sources.** A total information source score was calculated asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they get information about India from:

- traditional sources originating in their home country,
- traditional sources originating in India,
- online sources originating in India and social media sources.

Results show that among the traditional information sources originating in respondents’ home country, news channels ($n = 360, M = 4.96, SD = 1.64$) and
newspapers ($n = 362, M = 4.49, SD = 1.78$) were the top sources from which respondents get information about India. Among the traditional sources originating in India, Indian movies (Bollywood) ($n = 372, M = 5.02, SD = 1.21$) was the top source from which respondents get information about India, followed by Indian television serials ($n = 373, M = 3.60, SD = 1.64$). Among the online sources, the top sources were again Indian movies (Bollywood) online ($n = 372, M = 5.35, SD = 1.71$) and Indian television serials online ($n = 373, M = 3.79, SD = 1.64$) from which respondents get information about India (see Table 9).

In reference to Table 9, social media sources, Facebook ($n = 367, M = 5.35, SD = 1.62$) and YouTube ($n = 348, M = 5.05, SD = 1.71$) were the top sources from which respondents get information about India. Overall, respondents get somewhat more information about India from online media sources ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.46$) than traditional media sources ($M = 3.26, SD = 1.32$).
Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for Information Sources about India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sources</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional sources (Home country)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movies of my country</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television serials of my country</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News channels of my country</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio channels of my country</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers of my country</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional sources (Indian)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian movies (Bollywood)</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian television serials</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian news channels</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>1.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian radio stations</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian print newspapers</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian magazines</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total traditional sources (Home country + Indian)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Sources (Indian)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian movies (Bollywood) online</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian television serials online</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian news channels online</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian online radio stations</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian online newspapers</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian online magazines</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.41*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social media sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>5.69</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social media sources</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total online sources (Indian + social media)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign media channels</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total information sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All items were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Total information sources score is a total of a, b, c and d. Items with a * indicate variables that did not contribute significantly to the total information sources score.
**Online social relations.** This was measured by calculating the network size and the network time. To measure network size, respondents reported the number of users they followed and the number of the users who follow them on Twitter and the number of friends they have on Facebook (friends network of overall friends). Additionally, respondents also indicated the number of Indians (Indian friends network) they were connected with on social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat).

Results show that respondents’ friends network (overall friends) on Facebook ($n = 362, M = 4.93, SD = 1.88$) was stronger than on Twitter ($n = 315, M = 2.14, SD = 1.63$) (see Table 10). With regards to Indian friends network (number of Indian friends), respondents reported that they were strongly connected with Indians on Facebook ($n = 321, M = 2.92, SD = 1.63$) followed by WhatsApp ($n = 210, M = 2.23, SD = 1.71$) and Instagram ($n = 188, M = 2.14, SD = 1.60$). Twitter did not rank in the top three social networking sites through which respondents connected with Indians.

A total network size score was calculated adding scores for friends network (overall friends) subtotals and Indian friends network (number of Indian friends) subtotals. A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between total network size ($M = 24.43, SD = 8.26$) and total reputation ($M = 82.62, SD = 24.67$). Total network size and total reputation were negatively related, $r = - .242$, $p = 0.04$. 

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Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Online Social Relations (Network Size and Network Type)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends network (Overall friends)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter users you follow</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter users following you</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook friends</td>
<td>362</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indian friends network (Number of Indian friends)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Network Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Network time (Time communicating with Indians)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Network time</strong></td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Network size is the number of friends a user is connected with in a social network. For network size, responses were coded as None =1, 1-200 = 2, 201-300 = 3, 301-500 = 4, 501-700 = 5, 701-999 = 6, 1,000 and above = 7. Total network size = friends network (overall friends) + Indian friends network (Number of Indian friends). Network time is the amount of time respondents spend communicating with Indians. It was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1= *never* to 7 = *all the time*.  


Meanwhile, network time was measured by asking respondents to rate the amount of time they spend on communicating with Indians. Table 10 shows that respondents spend a large proportion of time communicating with Indians on Facebook ($n = 378, M = 3.33, SD = 1.90$), followed by WhatsApp ($n = 326, M = 2.10, SD = 1.65$) and Twitter ($n = 326, M = 2.08, SD = 1.87$). A Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between network time ($M = 24.43, SD = 8.26$) and total reputation ($M = 82.62, SD = 24.67$). Network time and total reputation scores were positively related, $r = .003, p > 0.05$.

**Analyses of the research questions and proposed hypotheses.** RQ3 asked which factors among ‘engagement on social media,’ ‘online social relations,’ and ‘information sources’ predict India’s reputation while controlling for age, employment status, and education. To examine RQ3, a multiple hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. At first, the items that measured engagement on social media (refer Tables 7 and 8), information sources (refer Table 9) and online social relations (refer Table 10) were computed. A composite score was calculated for each of the three constructs. Likewise, a composite score for reputation was calculated for emotional appeal, cultural appeal, economic appeal, leadership/political appeal and regional appeal (refer Table 6). In the composite score for engagement, items that measured engagement on Twitter were not included because the respondents for each item were extremely low.

The three independent variables of age, employment status, and education were entered into the model, explaining .31 of the variance in reputation (dependent variable). Next, after entering the three independent variables of engagement on social media,
information sources and online social relations in block 2, a significant amount of variance of 59%, $R^2 = .345, F (6, 39) = 3.41, p = .008$ in reputation was explained by the model as a whole. Engagement on social media, online social relations, and information sources also explained an additional 26% of the variance in reputation, after controlling for age, employment status, and education ($R^2$ change = .24, $F$ change (3, 39) = 4.90, $p = .006$). In the final model, only one variable of engagement on social media significantly predicted reputation ($\beta = .45, t (45) = 2.79, p = .008$) compared to online social relations ($\beta = -.04, t (45) = -.281, p > .05$) and information sources ($\beta = .10, t (45) = .58, p > .05$) that were not found to be significant predictors of reputation.

Similar to RQ3, a multiple hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to examine RQ4. This research question investigated which information sources about India among traditional and online sources best predicted the reputation of India. Scores on traditional information sources (home), traditional information sources (India), online sources (India) and online sources (social media) were the independent variables (refer Table 10 for items) and reputation score was the dependent variable.

Model 1 in Table 11 indicates demographic variables of age, employment status, and education, contributing .12 of the variance, $R^2 = .015, F (3, 209) = 1.05, p > .05$, with none of the variables demonstrating significant predictor outcomes. For the type of information sources (model 2), the forces that most significantly predict the criterion variable were traditional information sources (home) ($\beta = .25, t (209) = 3.66, p < .001$) and online sources (social media) ($\beta = .19, t (209) = 2.79, p < .05$). A significant amount
of variance at .36, \( R^2 = .13, F(7, 205) = 4.50, p < .001 \) in reputation was explained by the model as a whole.

Table 11

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Information Sources Predicting Reputation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-4.09</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>-.113</td>
<td>-.821</td>
<td>2.505</td>
<td>-.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>-.535</td>
<td>.884</td>
<td>-.043</td>
<td>-1.505</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td>-.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.180</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>1.611</td>
<td>1.359</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional sources (home)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.253</td>
<td>.258*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional sources (India)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.031</td>
<td>.777</td>
<td>-.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sources (India)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.425</td>
<td>.568</td>
<td>.068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sources (social media)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.448</td>
<td>.160</td>
<td>.191*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( F ) change</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.001*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Model 1 and Model 2 show predictors of reputation. Model 2 significantly predicts reputation; *\( p < .001 \)

To investigate H1, a linear regression analysis was conducted. H1 states that the higher the engagement of social media users with the Indian government accounts on social media, the higher the users rate the reputation of India. Total scores for engagement on Twitter were not considered because the number of cases is extremely small. Hence, only the total score for engagement on Facebook was considered. Analysis reveals that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between respondents’ engagement with the Indian government accounts on Facebook and their evaluation of India’s reputation (\( r = .364, n = 364, p < .001 \)). A linear regression analysis
for engagement on Facebook with Indian government accounts explained 36.4% of the variance in reputation. As a result, highly engaged social media users with the Indian government accounts on Facebook highly evaluated India’s reputation ($\beta = .364$, $t (43) = 6.99, p < .001$). Thus, H1 was supported.

H2 posited that the higher the degree of social media users’ online social relations with India the more negatively they rate the reputation of India. A composite score for online social relations was calculated adding scores for Indian friends network (number of Indian friends) and network time (for items refer Table 10). Similar to H1, a linear regression analysis was conducted with reputation as a dependent variable and online social relations as an independent variable. Results revealed a small insignificant negative correlation between respondents’ online social relations and their evaluation of India’s reputation ($r = -.110, n = 59, p > 0.05$). Moreover, online social relations predicted only 11% [$F (1, 57) = .70, p > 0.05$] of the variance in reputation. As a result, a higher degree of online social relations with Indians resulted in respondents negatively evaluating the reputation of India ($\beta = -.11, t (59) = -.83, p > 0.05$). Thus, H2 was partially accepted.

H3 stated that the higher the educational status of social media users, accounting for their age, the more positively they rate the reputation of India. Educational status of social media users was measured on an ordinal scale. Analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between educational status and reputation ($r = .105, n = 382, p < .001$). To further examine how education status predicts national reputation of India while controlling for the age of the respondents, a regression analysis was done. In the first step, age was entered which was followed by educational status in the second step.
Results revealed that the entire model predicted 14.3% of the variance in reputation, $F (2, 378) = 3.94, p = .020)$. The regression analysis between the variables revealed $\beta = .12, t (381) = 2.35, p < .001)$. Thus, H3 that the higher the educational status of social media users, accounting for their age, the more positively they rate the reputation of India was accepted.
Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the mediated public diplomacy of India on Twitter and Facebook. The emphasis was on the agendas and the reputation that the Indian government builds to influence perceptions of social media users in South Asia. The national reputation of India among South Asians was also investigated in the social media context.

As elaborated in the previous chapters, this study focused on several objectives: the first was to determine the agendas that the Indian government builds through its 15 Twitter and Facebook accounts of the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Diplomacy, and the embassies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The second was to examine the relationship between the Indian government agendas and the perceived agendas of South Asian social media users. The third objective was to investigate the predictors of national reputation from these measures: the degree of engagement on social media, the strength of online relationships, and the use of information sources.

Mediated public diplomacy of India or its approach to influence South Asians via social media to accept its policies as favorable was examined using two theoretical models—agenda building and reputation building. To examine the agenda building function, a quantitative analysis of 6,000 tweets and status updates that the Indian government publishes on its 15 social media accounts and a survey of social media users who follow these accounts were conducted. Further, engagement, online social relations, and information sources were measured to assess national reputation building.
This chapter discusses major findings and their implications for understanding India’s agenda building and reputation building on Twitter and Facebook. It builds on past research by contributing new theoretical arguments on the relationship between governments and social media users in the context of India’s mediated public diplomacy. It also highlights the limitations of this study and offers suggestions for future research. The discussion proffers recommendations to governments, especially to the Indian government on its practice of public diplomacy.

**Summary of the Key Findings**

(i) The top agendas that the Indian government builds on social media are politics, culture, and economy/finance, whereas the top agendas prominent for South Asian social media users are education, health and medicine, environment, economy/finance, and infrastructure. Thus, a few agendas—economy/finance and infrastructure— that were top agendas of the Indian government were also among the top agendas of the social media users.

(ii) Overall, the study shows agenda building at work. The perceived prominent agendas of social media users are significantly associated with the Indian government agendas on Twitter and Facebook.

(iii) The prominent agendas in relation to user reactions of favorites, retweets, and replies on Twitter were terrorism, environment, infrastructure and defense. On Facebook, the prominent agendas in relation to user reactions of likes, shares, and comments were also terrorism, environment and infrastructure along with corruption, health and medicine, and poverty.
(iv) High engagement of social media users with the Indian government accounts on Twitter and Facebook predicts perceived national reputation.

(v) Age, employment status, and education were factors in predicting perceived national reputation for India among social media users of traditional information sources (home) and those using social media to get information about India.

(vi) Information received from Indian movies (Bollywood) and Indian television serials does not predict perceived national reputation for India among social media users.

(vii) Age among highly educated social media users was a factor in predicting national reputation for India.

(viii) Having more friends on social media plus spending more time communicating with Indians on social media does not predict perceived national reputation for India.

**Indian Government Agendas on Twitter and Facebook**

Politics, culture, and economy/finance were the top agendas that the Indian government made prominent on its Twitter and Facebook accounts. An example of the politics agenda is the tweet: PM: “Today, I am humbled and honoured to join Pres @ashrafghani and all the MPs to dedicate this new abode of democracy to the Afghan nation”. One explanation for politics to emerge as a prominent agenda could be that a majority of the tweets and status updates the Indian government accounts published were about bilateral relations and agreements with South Asian nations, and live updates about
the official visits of South Asian leaders and Indian ministers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited 49 countries between June 2014 and May 2017 (Venkatraman, 2017). The social media updates about Prime Minister Modi’s meetings, statements, and the treaties he signed during these visits dominated the Indian government accounts, which are indicators of the politics agenda.

The embassy accounts, in particular, regularly posted announcements and answered queries of South Asians related to immigration, passports, and visas. A status update published on the India in Bangladesh account illustrates this. The update states: “We are happy to share a note left behind by a Bangladeshi citizen, appreciating our visa services for senior citizens. Mr. A.K. Masood Ahmed writes, “Excellent services by Indian High Commission & State Bank of India for senior citizens visa services”. Such updates could explain the prominence of the politics agenda.

Culture was the second top-ranked agenda for the Indian government accounts and included topics related to cultural exchanges, dances, literature, music, movies, yoga, and others. One example of such culture agenda is the status update: RT @IndiaToday: No one has threatened me to stop Yoga practice in Pakistan. People from all sects come to my class: Shamshad Haider, Yoga Instructor, Pakistan”. Culture as a prominent agenda can be attributed to two key strategies of the current Modi government: the yoga diplomacy and the cultural diplomacy. Modi employed yoga as the vital instrument of Indian’s soft power diplomacy. He ‘pushed’ the ancient art to the international platform calling it as ‘India’s gift to the world’ (Wade, 2016). After the success of the first International Yoga Day started at Modi’s request, Ayres (2016).
observed, “Over the past two weeks, the Indian diplomatic missions, the Ministry of External Affairs and the prime minister of India himself have ramped up their social media diplomacy on yoga in the run up to June 21, with everything from photographs of yoga practitioners around the world.” This statement sums up the yoga diplomacy efforts of the Indian government that could explain here its prominence as a culture agenda.

Based on the indicators of cultural diplomacy analyzed in the social media content, this strategy that the Modi government has employed could explain the culture agenda. This explanation is consistent with what has also been reported about the connection between cultural diplomacy and the culture agenda. For instance, the Twitter and Facebook accounts regularly posted short explainer videos that project India’s history and culture (Suri, 2016). Additionally, Suri (2016) reported that films and documentaries, along with music, projected the Indian diversity and multiplicity to foreign audiences. Consistent with the culture agenda, Suri (2016) also reports that the magazine titled *India Perspectives*, which is published in 17 languages and celebrates the Indian diaspora and achievements of Indian women, is shared with the millions of followers on social media.

For the Indian government to use culture as a dominant tool of diplomacy is not surprising because as stated in the literature review in Chapter 2, culture has been long used by nations to dominate and control political environment. For instance, the French imported their culture, language, and art to build reputation after their defeat in French-Prussian war (Hart, 2013).

Economy/finance, which was the third top-ranked agenda, is illustrated through this tweet: “RT @makeinindia: German companies look to invest 643 million
Updates about the ‘Make In India’ initiative that is held every year and attracts over 8,000 investors dominate the Indian government accounts along with topics related to goods and trade services, financial aid, budget and investments among others. This and other similar campaigns such as “@investindia @DP_World seeks to invest over $1b in India over next few years https://t.co/BGT7FTWYcP @Gulf_news” on the Indian government accounts on social media may explain the prominence of the economy/finance agenda.

These findings support previous studies on agenda building in India. For instance, Garud-Patkar and Kalyango, (2017) demonstrate that the top two political parties in India—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress party—also underscore the agendas of politics, foreign relations, and economy and finance in their tweets. The social media content analyzed here was also published when these two parties were in power.

**Agendas of Twitter and Facebook Users in South Asia**

Social media users who were citizens of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka were surveyed. For those users, education, health and medicine, environment, economy/finance and infrastructure were the perceived top agendas vital to their socioeconomic development. A majority of those users were young, had attained higher education, and were also employed. Hence, the implication here could be that South Asian youth perceive these agendas vital for their development for the following reasons: A World Economic Forum report determined that the most important issues South Asian millennials were concerned about in 2016 were education and employment
opportunities, and environment and infrastructure problems arising due to population growth (Gutta, 2016). This is consistent with the findings here. Another plausible argument here is that citizens surveyed here from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, being among the least developed countries in the world, may be concerned with the lack of adequate healthcare and infrastructure such as electricity, water, roads, and other human development amenities.

**Agenda Building and Mediated Public Diplomacy**

For mediated public diplomacy, although the Indian government agendas correlated with the perceived prominent agendas of the social media users, its top agendas did not always match with the users’ agendas. Only economy/finance and infrastructure were in the top five agendas for both the Indian government and the social media users. For economy/finance and infrastructure, these two agendas for the case of Twitter and Facebook in India illustrate an agenda-building function. The implication here is that for mediated public diplomacy, tweets and status updates published on the Indian government accounts regarding the economy/finance and infrastructure are influential tools of agenda building. India increased aid and loans to South Asian countries from USD 383.01 million in 2009-10 to about USD 1.15 billion in 2015-16 with Bhutan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Maldives being the highest recipients. This illustrates India’s effort to boost infrastructure and other economic activities with neighboring countries that seemed to have boosted its impact on agenda building via social media.
Prominent Agendas in Relation to User Reactions

The top two agendas of terrorism and environment were the same in relation to the Twitter user reactions of favorites, retweets and replies. Also, these were the same top two agendas in relation to Facebook likes and Facebook comments. Most likely, a possible explanation for terrorism to generate the maximum user reactions could be that topics of death and violence that indicated this agenda generated strong emotional reactions. The South Asian region is a home to many extremist groups such as the Taliban and the Lashkar-e-Taiba that have claimed responsibilities for recent terror attacks in the region. Terrorism evokes fear and uncertainty among people that gets reflected in their reactions to the agenda on Twitter and Facebook.

For environment to emerge as a top-ranked agenda in terms of user reactions could be that floods, earthquakes and other natural calamities are frequently experienced by South Asia citizens. These phenomena indicated the environment agenda. Both terrorism and environmental concerns disrupt normal public life, often causing death and destruction. This is likely to indicate why these agendas generated the maximum user reactions on Twitter and Facebook.

National Reputation and Engagement on Social Media

For Facebook users who were highly engaged with the Indian government accounts, the greater the predictions concerning perceived national reputation for India. A possible reason for this outcome could be that the Indian government Twitter and Facebook accounts focused on involving users in conversations. This study mirrors Natarajan’s (2014) theoretical arguments that the Indian government’s engagement
initiatives emphasized “advancing conversations” through two-way communication. One example of this is the Facebook page of the Indian embassy in Nepal ‘India in Nepal’ that organized weekly quizzes on its account to foster a two-way symmetrical conversation with its followers. Through these quizzes, the Indian government disseminated positive information about India.

The quizzes were framed in such a way that encouraged social media users to return to the Indian Embassy in Nepal’s Facebook account. Also, the quiz winners were awarded free tickets for Bollywood films and embassy-sponsored trips to India. A Facebook update illustrates this: “The winner for Bollywood Quiz Contest #1 is @Praveen Pandian! Congrats to the Winner. The next quiz is coming tomm. Check out this page for details!!!”. Such initiatives may explain why users were highly engaged on Facebook with Indian government accounts, which increased the social media engagement and scored high on the perceived national reputation indicators.

Another possible indication for engagement predicting high national reputation could be attributed to some former and present Indian ministers of external affairs who were answering queries of social media users on Twitter in real time. Particularly, the current minister of external affairs, Sushma Swaraj, has used Twitter to resolve day-to-day visa issues of her followers. She has personally addressed each and every user query round-the-clock. Such engagements are exemplars of how reputation of India could be theoretically enhanced, hence the assumption for this high outcome among social media users. This finding is in line with Dijkmans et al. (2015), Li, Berens and de Maertelaere
(2013), and Van Doorn et al. (2010) who have also demonstrated that high engagement increases reputation.

One of the many reasons why the Indian government has implemented engagement programs and is conducting administrative tasks through social media could be that it aims to sustain conversations with these users. This could be perceived as a means to directly influence social media users instead of depending on opinion leaders that embassies did in the past in order to build reputation.

**Reputation and Information Sources**

For the Indian government, identifying the key media sources that provide information about itself to South Asians is essential to make its mediated public diplomacy efforts more targeted. In this study, only traditional sources that originate in the social media users’ home countries and social media sources strongly predicted perceived national reputation.

A likely explanation of this finding could be that the elites in the targeted South Asian nations promote a positive image of India to their respective media. As noted in the literature in Chapter 3, Afghan elites perceived India’s policies favorably because of their familiarity with India (Hanauer & Chalk, 2012). India provides infrastructure and economic assistance to Afghanistan. One such initiative is Afghanistan’s parliament building that India constructed and completed in 2015 at the cost of USD 90 million. India has also provided monetary and labor assistance in building the Salma dam that irrigates 75,000 hectares of agricultural land, the Zaranj-Delaram road and the Chahbahar
port that facilitate the movement of goods, and power grids that transmit electricity to Kabul.

Similarly, India regularly contributes to numerous infrastructural and development projects in South Asia and is also among the top financial aid providers to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives and Sri Lanka. For instance, in 2017, it offered $4.5 billion development assistance line of credit, and $500 million line of credit for defense purchases to Bangladesh. It is likely that such support gets the attention of foreign elites to positively portray India’s image, which in turn is reported in the news media and plausibly picked up by social media users. In theory, mediated public diplomacy scholars such as Entman (2008) stated that governments have to first influence foreign elites and expect them to influence foreign media, and foreign public to build a favorable national reputation.

This study shows that Indian media sources, both traditional (newspapers, television and radio, among others) and online (online newspapers and online television, among others) did not predict national reputation. The assumption here, based on conjecture and media reports, is the public distrust of the Indian media because of practices such as ‘paid news’ consisting of publishing advertorials disguised as news. In 2011, the Press Council of India reported that many reputed Indian newspapers published information and opinions as facts from corporations and political leaders.

A plausible justification for the Indian information sources not predicting national reputation could be that these sources are ‘foreign’ media for social media users. These foreign sources are likely to be perceived as biased propaganda tools. Distrust over a
‘foreign’ information source is likely to be a low predictor of perceived national reputation among South Asian social media users.

**National Reputation and Online Social Relations**

South Asian social media users who had more friends on social media and spent time communicating with Indians on Twitter and Facebook negatively rated the national reputation for India. Based on the descriptive indicators from the survey, it is likely that South Asian social media users got exposed to diverse sources who shared negative information about India. Such information is likely to influence positive opinions, if any, about India leading to social media users negatively rating perceived national reputation. Previously, Seo (2010) also showed that South Koreans with strong online social relations were less likely to positively rate the reputation of the United States.

**Social Media Usage in South Asia**

The study found that a majority of South Asian social media users were young. They largely preferred Facebook as a medium for social networking instead of Twitter. They also received more information about India from Facebook than Twitter. Contrary to the perceived low preference of Twitter for social media users, the Indian government seems to be making more efforts on Twitter. For instance, the Indian ministers such as Sushma Swaraj engage in conversations with users on Twitter, not Facebook. The Indian government runs *The Indian Diplomacy* account, established to bolster its diplomacy efforts, only on Twitter, not Facebook. Also, The Indian Embassy in Pakistan only has a Twitter account. Such a strategy could imply that the Indian mediated public diplomacy
efforts are being restricted in their scope. This limitation most likely hints on a possible need for a stronger approach on Facebook to target a larger number of South Asians.

**Limitations and Future Studies**

This study confirms that there is a link between the Indian government agendas to the agendas of social media users. However, these findings do not suggest the direction of agenda-building. Future studies should also consider a time-series analysis that investigates the agenda-building effects in the social media context at different time lags. Such an analysis could also determine which actors are the most effective in the agenda-building process that influences the mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia.

The number of social media users surveyed per country was very small. Hence, the agendas of the social media users from the seven neighboring nations were not examined country-wise with the agendas of the Indian government. However, such a country-wise examination could have accounted for country variations in the agenda-building function.

Another challenge, which is also a possible limitation of this study, stems from the fact that social media is a vast sphere where multiple factors interact with each other. The factors of engagement, online social relations and information sources examined here were hypothesized from previous studies for reasons discussed in the previous chapters. However, these factors may be only a few plausible variables influencing the national reputation of India. Nonetheless, they provide important explanations of the reputation building model in the context of the Indian mediated public diplomacy. Future studies can expand the scope of analysis to include other individual-level factors such as
personality traits of social media users, their preference of social networking sites among others that are likely to influence national reputation in the social media context.

In the same context as the above limitation, another challenge arises from the network characteristics. This study examines the mediated public diplomacy of India on only two social networking sites, Twitter and Facebook. However, the Indian government uses other platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp among others for mediated public diplomacy. These platforms are vastly different in their characteristics. For instance, YouTube is a video-based platform whereas Instagram is a photo-based site. It is likely that these characteristics influence the level of engagement of social media users in South Asia with the Indian government diplomacy accounts. Further analysis can also examine how these characteristics influence factors of online social relations and information sources to predict the national reputation of India. Such investigations would enrich empirical research as well as assist the Indian government in designing effective mediated public diplomacy campaigns.

Conclusion

The mediated public diplomacy of India in South Asia can be understood through agenda building and through reputation building. The Indian government can build national reputation by engaging social media users on its Twitter and Facebook accounts. National reputation can also be built through traditional information sources in social media users’ home country and through social networking sites.

The relationship between the Indian government agendas and the social media users’ agendas shows that tweets and status updates related to infrastructure and
economy/finance are the function of agenda building. Hence, the study infers that Twitter and Facebook are vital social media outlets of India’s mediated public diplomacy in South Asia. The conclusion here is that if the Indian government aims to influence the public agendas among South Asians, then it should publish more content related to the infrastructure and economy/finance agendas on social media.

In the same vein, on its Twitter and Facebook accounts, the Indian government mostly promotes agendas related to politics, culture and economy/finance. In contrast, for the South Asian social media users who follow these accounts, the education, health and medicine, environment, economy/finance, and infrastructure agendas are most prominent. In terms of likes, favorites, comments, and shares among others—user reactions that indicate engagement—the top-ranked agendas were terrorism, environment, infrastructure. Hence, to engage South Asian social media users, the Indian government’s social media accounts should focus on publishing content related to these top agendas.

For mediated public diplomacy to achieve national reputation in the South Asian nations, the Indian government should continue to campaign via social networking sites. Especially, Facebook and YouTube—the two social networking sources from which South Asians social media users get more information about India—should be employed to implement targeted engagement programs. A good approach to engage the target audience on these platforms is to publish content that highlights Indian policies in a positive light. Such information could also counter the negative information that social media users most likely receive because of their strong online social relations.
Indian movies (Bollywood) and television serials were also major platforms through which South Asians receive information about India. However, these sources did not predict national reputation. As a result, India’s image may not be positively portrayed via these sources.

Another observation is that except for the Indian embassy in Bangladesh that publishes content in Bengali as well as in English on social media, other embassies and diplomacy accounts publish content only in English. Scholars of public diplomacy in other countries have demonstrated that foreign audiences accept a nation’s policy when they perceive to share a common language (Wu, 2007). Also, the English Proficiency Index (6th edition) shows that South Asian nations, except for India, rank from low to very low in the English proficiency. This indicates that English may not be an appropriate language to communicate and to engage in a dialog with South Asians. A solution to the language issue would be to follow the strategy of the Indian Embassy in Bangladesh. This is also a public diplomacy strategy that the United States government employs on all social media accounts. It publishes tweets and updates in the foreign language as well in English to show cultural and language sensitivity towards foreign audiences. Publishing in the local language on the social media sites would help Indian officials to communicate policies clearly to international audiences and potentially build long-term relations with South Asian audiences.

Social media are dynamic and evolving platforms with a multitude of agenda building and reputation building factors beyond those studied here. This study’s assessment of mediated public diplomacy through agenda building and reputation
building is a novel approach to understanding the central importance and role of social media in the public diplomacy practice. The new pathways that this study provides indicate that Twitter and Facebook, as integral and instrumental platforms of the 21st century statecraft, are here to stay.
References


Appendix A: Codebook

The following are instructions for coding tweets and Facebook status updates from the Indian embassy accounts. The unit of analysis is a tweet or a Facebook update. The coding categories were adopted from previous studies mentioned in the methodology chapter. These categories were modified and adapted to examine mediated public diplomacy.

**V1: Coder name** Mention your name.

**V2: Source**
Each unit of analysis is either a tweet or a Facebook status update sourced either from Twitter or Facebook. A tweet is a 140-word message that is posted on Twitter. A status update is usually a short message posted on the social networking site Facebook. The Microsoft excel sheet presented to you will have a unique id associated with each unit. A click on the id will link you to the source of that unit. Please mention this on the coding sheet.
1 = Twitter
2 = Facebook

**V3. Name of the Twitter or Facebook account**
This is the name of the Indian government-sponsored channel on Twitter or Facebook.
1 = India in Afghanistan (@IndianEmbKabul)
2 = India in Bangladesh (@ihcdhaka)
3 = India in Bhutan (@IndiaInbhutan)
4 = India in Maldives (@EoIMaldives)
5 = India in Nepal (@IndiaInNepal)
6 = India in Pakistan (@IndiaInPakistan)
7 = India in Sri Lanka (@IndiaInSL)
8 = Indian Diplomacy (@IndianDiplomacy)
9 = Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIndia)
11 = India in Afghanistan (Embassy of India, Kabul, @IndiaInAfghanistan)
22 = India in Bangladesh (High Commission of India, Dhaka @IndiainBangladesh)
33 = India in Bhutan (Embassy of India, Thimphu, @IndiaInBhutan)
44 = India in Maldives (Embassy of India, Malé, @IndiaInMaldives)
55 = India in Nepal (Embassy of India Kathmandu, @IndiaInNepal)
66 = 666
77 = India in Sri Lanka (High Commission of India, Colombo, @IndiaInSriLanka)
88 = 888
99 = Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (@MEAINDIA)
**V4: ID or identification number**
This is already inserted in the excel sheet.

**V5: Tweet/ Facebook post link**
This is already inserted in the excel sheet.

**V6: Year/Month/date (fill in if not inserted)**
Each tweet and status update has the published date mentioned on it. This is already inserted in the excel sheet. If there is no date mentioned, click on the unique id that links you to the original tweet or Facebook post. Mention the date in the format: YYYY/MM/DD. The tweets and statuses that are published this year will not have a year. When the year is not mentioned use 2017.

**V7: Text of the tweet/status update (fill in if not inserted)**
This is already inserted in the excel sheet. If the text is missing please insert the first four words of the tweet or status update.

**V8: Length (word count) (fill in)**
This is the length of the tweet or the Facebook post. Count the total number of words in the tweet or the status update by copy pasting it in a word document. Please enter this number on the sheet. If the tweet or the Facebook status update does not have any text, please mention that total number of words as 0.
** For Facebook, although you will analyze only the first 140 words. Please copy paste the entire post and insert the word count. If the word count is 300 or 300+ just put 300.

**V9: Type of the Tweet/Facebook Status Update:**
This refers to the nature of content that is produced or shared by Indian government-sponsored channels. The tweets and status updates are analyzed into three categories: original tweet or status update, retweet or shared update, and third-party tweet or update.

1 = **Original tweet or status update:**
It consists of original content produced by the real account holder (@username) of the Twitter/FB profile. This is neither a retweet or ‘replying to’ tweet on Twitter nor is it a share on Facebook.

2 = **Retweet/ or a share of an update**
It is republished content or a repost of content published or produced by other users which the account holder publishes on his profile. This is not his original content.
In case of Twitter, ‘retweeted or RT’ or ‘replying to @username’ are indications of a retweet. For instance, in the tweet below, IndiainNepal has retweeted @IndianDiplomacy’s tweet.

In case of Facebook, when a user shares a post, the word ‘shared’ follows his/her name. For instance, in the post below, Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka has shared Indian Cultural Center, Colombo’s photo.

3 = Third Party Tweet/Status update
This consists of content which is posted by users on the original account holder’s profile.
For Twitter only

**V10: Author whose tweet is retweeted**
These are the people whose retweets or status updates have been retweeted
0 = Not a retweet (the tweet being analyzed is not a retweet)
1 = India in Afghanistan (@IndianEmbKabul)
2 = India in Bangladesh (@ihecdhaka)
3 = India in Bhutan (@Indiainbhutan)
4 = India in Maldives (@EoIMaldives)
5 = India in Nepal (@IndiaInNepal)
6 = India in Pakistan (@IndiaInPakistan)
7 = India in Sri Lanka (@IndiaInSL)
8 = Indian Diplomacy (@IndianDiplomacy)
9 = Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIndia)
10 = Indian politician, Indian political agency, institution, (anything Indian+political)
11 = Foreign politician (non-Indian; same as category 10 except not Indian)
12 = Indian Media (Please google to check if this is an Indian media)
13 = Foreign Media (Please google if this is a media source and is not India)
14 = Other

For Facebook only

**V10: Author whose status update is shared**
These are the people whose retweets or status updates have been retweeted
0 = Not a share (the status update being analyzed is not a share)
21 = India in Afghanistan (Embassy of India, Kabul, @IndiaInAfghanistan)
22 = India in Bangladesh (High Commission of India, Dhaka @IndiaInBangladesh)
23 = India in Bhutan (Embassy of India, Thimphu, @IndiaInBhutan)
24 = India in Maldives (Embassy of India, Malé, @IndiaInMaldives)
25 = India in Nepal (Embassy of India Kathmandu, @IndiaInNepal)
26 = 666
27 = India in Sri Lanka (High Commission of India, Colombo, @IndiaInSriLanka)
28 = 888
29 = Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (@MEAINdia)
10 = Indian politician, Indian political agency, institution, (anything Indian+political)
11 = Foreign politician (non-Indian; same as category 10 except not Indian)
12 = Indian Media (Please google to check if this is an Indian media)
13 = Foreign Media (Please google if this is a media source and is not India)
14 = Other
V11: Agendas
Look for a keyword to determine the categorization. In determining the keywords, look for hashtags. When a tweet or a Facebook update falls under two categories, consider the overall dominant theme. For instance, the tweet, “in the tweet, “India's #health capital With its modern medical infrastructure. Chennai attracts about 40% of tourists for healthcare from abroad”, that the Indian Diplomacy channel published, two keywords ‘medical’ and ‘infrastructure’ suggest that the tweet can be categorized either under health/medicine or infrastructure. To avoid disagreement in this case, look at that larger theme in the tweet that India attracts tourists because of its medical facilities. Moreover, the hashtag ‘health’ suggests that the channel’s objective is to make the health agenda relevant. Hence, the tweet was classified under the health category.

1 = Politics
Mutual and non-mutual interests, diplomacy, bilateral relations, visits by foreign leaders, and immigration, passports and visas, political partnerships, politicians traveling, calling a meeting, politicians going to a religious place, starting relationships, agreements, cooperation, extradition.

2 = Economics/Finance
Economic and financial activities, such as, profitability, growth prospects, and risk of investment, budget, taxes, stock exchange, employment/unemployment/wages. Money/monetary disposition, regulation of resources, and goods and trade services, handing checks (cheques), generosity (in terms of money),

3 = Culture
Arts and culture, rich historical past, cultural exchanges, dances, literature, music, movies, fashion, books; tributes and congratulatory messages, yoga, religion, language, Hindi, pilgrimage, tributes, remembrance. Pravasi = tourist (in Hindi)

4 = Education
Educational exchanges, scholarships, news about school, college level-education, student protests, illiteracy, other educational opportunities.

5 = Infrastructure
Critical infrastructure such as transportation, railways, roads and basic amenities such as food, water, oil, telecommunication, electricity, power, irrigation, and problems related to these areas.

6 = Technology
Technology, space technology, digitalization, information technology.

7 = Health and medicine
Medical facilities, doctors, medicines, health drives and health literacy programs, medical emergencies, setting up of hospitals.
8 = Terrorism
This includes terrorism, intelligence and security agencies, armed forces, police, issues concerning crime.

9 = Corruption
This includes frauds, money laundering, bribes.

10 = Poverty
This includes scarcity of funds, focus on poor and homeless, destitution.

11 = Defense
Intelligence and security agencies, armed forces, navy, air force, police, issues concerning crime, rescue of citizens.

12 = Environment
Biodiversity, climate change. Green day, cleanliness drives, global warming, weather, pollution, natural disasters.

13 = Sports
This includes cricket, hockey, Commonwealth games or content about any other sport.

14 = Other
Items that could not be classified in any of the above 13 categories.

V12: Nature of tweet or Facebook status update
1 = Inbound (about oneself. Here it is India): These are tweets and Facebook updates exclusively focusing about India or Indians. In order to code this category, concentrate on subject of the tweet. If India, Indian leaders or any information about India is in the subject, the tweet or the Facebook post will be a subjective or an inbound tweet or post. For instance,
2 = **Outbound (about others nations):** These tweets and Facebook updates are about a foreign nation or nationals. In order to code this category, concentrate on subject of the tweet. If foreign nations, individuals, or any other information about non-India events are in the subject, the tweet or the Facebook post will be objective outbound tweet or post.

![Tweet example](https://example.com/tweet.jpg)

Mujib Mashal @MujMash Feb 20
Two afgan players selected for IPL 🏏. One of them selling for twice as much as Mitchell Johnson & Eoin Morgan. Proud day for Afghan cricket.

3 = **Mixed (India and a foreign nation mentioned in the subject of the tweet or FB status update or any general category):** Tweets and Facebook updates that focus on both India and a foreign nation.

**V13: Links (URLs)**
Links or URLs are included in tweets and Facebook posts to direct social media users to information-based sources. Click on the link to determine which category does the link or URL belong to.
0 = No link or URL
1 = URL directs to **Indian sources** such as Indian government website, India media to India media (Economic Times, Times of India, etc. Please check), Indian citizens.
2 = URL directs to **non-Indian sources** such as foreign government websites, foreign media, foreign citizens.

**V14: No. of photographs (fill in)**
This is the total number of photos/images embedded in the tweet or the status update. Please enter the total number.

**V15: No. of videos (fill in)**
This is the total number of videos embedded in the tweet or the status update. Please enter the total number.

**V16: Hashtags**
Hashtags are keywords such as #Indiadigital or #newdevelopment, which are used to tag tweets or Facebook posts. These keywords begin with the symbol ‘#’. When there is no
hashtag present in the tweet mark = 0 (no hashtag present). If a hashtag is present mark = 1
0 = Hashtag Not present
1 = Hashtag present

**V17: Presence of @**
A mention is a tweet or Facebook post that contains another person's @username anywhere in the body of the tweet. When there is no ‘@’ present in the tweet mark = 0 otherwise mark = 1
0 = @ symbol not present
1 = @ symbol present

*Code variables from V18 to V20 only for Twitter*

**V18: No. of replies (fill in)**
This is the total number of ‘reply to (single arrow)’ that appears below a tweet. Please enter the total number.

**V19: No. of retweets (fill in)**
This is the total number of ‘retweets (two arrows)’ that appear below a tweet. Please enter the total number.

**V20: No. of favorites (fill in)**
This is the total number of ‘hearts’ that appear below a tweet. Please enter the total number.

*Code variables from V21 to V28 only for Facebook*

**V18: No. of comments (fill in)**
This is the total number of comments that appear below a status update. Please enter the total number.

**V19: No. of shares (fill in)**
This is the total number of ‘shares (arrow symbol)’ that appear below a status update. Please enter the total number.
No variable is coded as V20 for Facebook

**V21: No. of likes (fill in)**
The Facebook “Like” button is a feature that allows users to show their support for specific comments, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or fan pages. It is a way to let people know that you support the agenda without leaving a comment. This is the number associated with the ‘thumbs up’ symbol that appears below a Facebook post. Please enter the total number.

**V22: No. of loves (fill in)**
This Facebook ‘love’ emoji is under the “Like” button. It allows users to show extreme approval or affection towards specific comments, pictures. Please enter the number associated with the ‘love’ emoji that appears below a Facebook status update.

**V23: No. of ha ha ha reactions (fill in)**
This Facebook ‘laughter’ emoji is under the “Like” button. It allows users to react to something funny or sarcastic or to simply express ‘happiness/laughter’ towards specific comments, pictures and statuses. Please enter the number associated with the ‘laughter’ emoji that appears below a Facebook status update.

**V24: No. of wow reactions (fill in)**
This Facebook ‘surprise/shock’ emoji is under the “Like” button. It allows users to express their ‘surprise/shock’ towards specific comments, pictures and statuses. Please enter the number associated with the ‘surprise’ emoji that appears below a Facebook status update.

**V25: No. of sad reactions (fill in)**
This Facebook ‘sad’ emoji is under the “Like” button. It allows users to show their grief, sorrow or a reaction opposite to the reaction expressed through the ‘like’ option. Please enter the number associated with the ‘sad’ emoji that appears below a Facebook status update.

**V26: No. of angry reactions (fill in)**
This Facebook emoji is under the “Like” button. It allows users to show their anger towards specific comments, pictures and statuses. Please enter the number associated with the ‘angry’ emoji that appears below a Facebook status update.
Appendix B: Coding Sheet

V1: Coder name *(fill in)*

V2: Source
1 = Twitter
2 = Facebook

V3: Name of the Indian government channel

V4: ID or identification number

V5: Tweet/ Facebook post link

V6: Year/Month/date *(fill in if not inserted)*

V7: Text of the tweet/status update *(fill in if not inserted)*

V8: No. of words *(fill in)*

V9: Type of the Tweet/Facebook Status Update
1 = Original tweet or status update:
2 = Retweet/ or a share of an update
3 = Third Party Tweet/Status update

*For Twitter only*

V10: Author whose tweet was retweet
0 = Not a retweet (the tweet being analyzed is not a retweet)
1= India in Afghanistan (@IndianEmbKabul)
2 = India in Bangladesh (@ihcdhaka)
3 = India in Bhutan (@Indiainbhutan)
4 = India in Maldives (@EoIMaldives)
5 = India in Nepal (@IndiaInNepal)
6 = India in Pakistan (@IndiaInPakistan)
7 = India in Sri Lanka (@IndiaInSL)
8 = Indian Diplomacy (@IndianDiplomacy)
9 = Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIndia)
10 = Indian politician
11 = Non-Indian politician (foreign politician)
12 = Indian Media
13 = Non-Indian Media (foreign media)
14 = Other

For Facebook only

V10: Author whose status update was shared
0 = Not a share (the status update being analyzed is not a share)
21 = India in Afghanistan (Embassy of India, Kabul, @IndiaInAfghanistan)
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23 = India in Bhutan (Embassy of India, Thimphu, @IndiaInBhutan)
24 = India in Maldives (Embassy of India, Malé, @IndiaInMaldives)
25 = India in Nepal (Embassy of India Kathmandu, @IndiaInNepal)
26 = 666
27 = India in Sri Lanka (High Commission of India, Colombo, @IndiaInSriLanka)
28 = 888
29 = Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India (@MEAINDIA)
10 = Indian politicians, political parties, political agencies (Anything Indian+political)
11 = Foreign politicians, political parties, political agencies (Anything NOT Indian+political)
12 = Indian Media
13 = Non-Indian Media (foreign media)
14 = Other

V11: Agendas
1 = Politics
2 = Economy/Finance
3 = Culture
4 = Education
5 = Infrastructure
6 = Technology
7 = Health and medicine
8 = Terrorism
9 = Corruption
10 = Poverty
11 = Defense
12 = Environment
13 = Sports
14 = Other

V12: Nature of tweet or Facebook status update:
1 = Inbound/about oneself = about India
2 = Outbound/about others = not about India
3 = Mixed (General – about no one)

V13: Links (URLs)
0 = No link or URL
1 = URL directs to Indian sources such as Indian government websites, India media, Indian citizens.
2 = URL directs to non-Indian sources such as foreign government websites, foreign media; foreign citizens

V14: No. of photographs (fill in)
If there are no photographs, please insert 0

V15: No. of Videos (fill in)
If there are no videos, please insert 0

V16: Hashtags
0 = Hashtag Not present
1 = Hashtag present

V17: Presence of @
0 = @ symbol not present
1 = @ symbol present

Code variables V18 to V20 only for Twitter

V18: No. of replies to (fill in)
If there are no replies, please insert 0

V19: No. of retweets (fill in)
If there are no retweets, please insert 0

**V20: No. of favorites (hearts): (fill in)**
If there are no favorites (hearts), please insert 0

*Code variables from V18 to V26 only for Facebook*

**V18: No. of comments (fill in)**
If there are no comments, please insert 0

**V19: No. of shares (fill in)**
If there are no shares, please insert 0
No variable is coded as V20 for Facebook

**V21: No. of likes (fill in)**
If there are no likes, please insert 0

**V22: No. of loves: (fill in)**
If there are no loves (hearts), please insert 0

**V23: No. of ha ha ha reactions (fill in)**
If there are no hahaha reactions, please insert 0

**V24: No. of wow reactions (fill in)**
If there are no wow reactions, please insert 0

**V25: No. of sad reactions (fill in)**
If there are no sad reactions, please insert 0

**V26: No. of angry reactions (fill in)**
If there are no angry reactions, please insert 0
Appendix C: Questionnaire

Ohio University Consent Form for Survey Participants

Title of Research: Indian Diplomacy and Social Media

Researcher: Nisha Garud

You are being asked to participate in a survey for a research project. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and are satisfied and okay with the explanation, you will be asked to respond to the questions. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to understand you use social media to get information about India. Your participation in the study will last for no more than 30 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated as a result of participating in this study.

Benefits

1. This study is important to social science because it helps us understand how governments can use social media to influence public opinion.
2. This study will help identify obstacles that may exist in initiating conversations between governments and citizens, what content should governments post on Twitter and Facebook to engage citizens and will therefore benefit society.
3. Individually, you may benefit by expressing your opinion, feelings about India

Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by removing the identifiers and by keeping the data in a secure location on researcher’s computers.

Additionally, the data will be deleted after June 14, 2019.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

**Compensation**

As compensation for your time and effort in completing this survey, you will be entered into a drawing for a $5 gift cards from Amazon after you have completed all of the questions, if you choose to provide your e-mail address, which is what will be entered into the drawing. Winners will be contacted by the lead researcher. There will be one gift card for every 200 responses.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Nisha Garud at 740-590-6864 or at ng150512@ohio.edu OR Dr. Yusuf Kalyango Jr. at 740-597-3335 or kalyango@ohio.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you are agreeing that:

- You have read this consent form
- You have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction.
- You understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study
- You are 18 years of age or older
- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary
- You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I have read and understood the consent form and I am willing to proceed to the survey

Yes
No

Version Date: [6/14/17]
Q1. In which country were you born (please choose one)?

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan
4. India
5. Maldives
6. Nepal
7. Pakistan
8. Sri Lanka
777. Other (please specify) ............
999. Do not wish to answer

Q2. Which category below indicates your age?

1. Younger than 19 years
2. 19 – 29
3. 30 – 39
4. 40 – 49
5. 50 – 59
6. 60-69
7. 70 years or older
999. Do not wish to answer

Q3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1. No formal education
2. Primary school
3. Secondary school
4. Higher secondary school
5. Vocational diploma program
6. Bachelor’s degree
7. Master’s degree
8. Doctoral degree
777. Other (please specify) ............
999. Do not wish to answer

Q4. What is your country of citizenship (check all that apply)?

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan
4. India
5. Maldives
6. Nepal
7. Pakistan
8. Sri Lanka
777. Other (please specify) ............
999. Do not wish to answer

Q5. Where do you currently live (please choose one)?

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Bhutan
4. India
5. Maldives
6. Nepal
7. Pakistan
8. Sri Lanka
777. Other (please specify) ............
999. Do not wish to answer

*If participants live in India, they will skip Questions 6, 7 and 8 and move to Question 9.*

Q6. How many times have you visited India?

1. Never visited India
2. 1-4 times
3. 5-9 times
4. 10 or more times
777. Unsure

Q7. What was the purpose of your trip during your last visit to India? (Check all that apply)

1. Tourism
2. Education
3. Business
4. Employment (job purposes)
5. Attend a sporting event
6. Visit family
7. Visit friends
8. Medical reasons
9. Religious reasons
10. In transit
777. Other (please specify) ...........
999. Do not wish to answer

Q8. Overall, how would you describe your experience during your visit(s) to India?

1. Extremely Negative
2. Negative
3. Somewhat Negative
4. Neutral
5. Somewhat Positive
6. Positive
7. Extremely Positive
999. Do not wish to answer

Q9. For each of the following statements choose only one option that best represents your opinion about India on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I “feel good” about India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>I “like” India</td>
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<td>I “admire” India</td>
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<td>I “trust” India</td>
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<td>India’s culture is “distinct”</td>
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<tr>
<td>India’s culture is “appealing”</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>India’s culture is “diverse”</td>
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<tr>
<td>India’s history is “rich”</td>
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<tr>
<td>India’s “infrastructure is strong”</td>
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<td>India produces “quality products”</td>
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<tr>
<td>India is a “promising place to start a business”</td>
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<td>India’s “industrial sector is well developed”</td>
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<td>India’s democratic institutions are strong</td>
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<td>India promotes “international”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Indian “politicians are non-corrupt”
Indian politicians “follow rule of law”
India works for “regional cooperation” in South Asia
India’s “foreign policy is favorable” towards South Asia
India works for “peace” in South Asia
India works to “unite” South Asia

Q10. From the list of issues below, rate how important or unimportant each issue is for your socio-economic development on a scale of 1 (extremely unimportant) through 7 (extremely important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>Regional conflicts</td>
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<td>Corruption</td>
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<td>Illiteracy</td>
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<td>Poverty</td>
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<td>Unemployment</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (Please specify)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q11. Which of the following social networking sites do you use?

1. Only Twitter
2. Only Facebook
3. Both Twitter and Facebook
4. None of the above
999. Do not wish to answer
In the above question,
If participants select **TWITTER ONLY**, they will be directed to questions 12 and 13
If participants select **FACEBOOK ONLY**, they will be directed to questions 14 and 15
If participants select **BOTH**, they will be required to answer questions 12, 13, 14, 15

**Q12.** On Twitter, which social media accounts for the Indian embassies and Indian government accounts do you follow (check all that apply)?

1. Indian Diplomacy (@IndianDiplomacy)
2. Indian Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIndia)
3. Indian Embassy in Afghanistan (@IndianEmbKabul)
4. Indian Embassy in Bhutan (@ihcdhaka)
5. Indian Embassy in Bangladesh (@IndiaInBhutan)
6. Indian Embassy in Maldives (@EoIMaldives)
7. Indian Embassy in Nepal (@IndiaInNepal)
8. Indian Embassy in Pakistan (@IndiaInPakistan)
9. Indian Embassy in Sri Lanka (@IndiaInSL)
10. Other (please specify) …………………………
11. Do not wish to answer

*For question 13, please choose only one option that best represents your opinion on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree).*

**Q13.** In relation to one or more Indian Twitter accounts you selected in the previous question, please respond to what extent you agree or disagree with the following items:

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<th>4</th>
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<th>6</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read their tweets</td>
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<tr>
<td>I watch their photos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I watch their videos</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I comment on their tweets</td>
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<td>I comment on their photos</td>
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<td>I comment on their videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I retweet their tweets</td>
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<tr>
<td>I retweet their photos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I retweet their videos</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I favorite their tweets</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I favorite their photos</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

207
Q14. On Facebook, which social media accounts for the Indian embassies and Indian Government do you follow (check all that apply):
   1. Indian Ministry of External Affairs (@MEAIndia)
   2. Embassy of India, Kabul (@IndiaInAfghanistan)
   3. High Commission of India, Dhaka (@IndiaInBangladesh)
   4. Embassy of India, Thimphu (@IndiaInBhutan)
   5. Embassy of India, Malé (@IndiaInMaldives)
   6. Embassy of India, Kathmandu (@IndiaInNepal)
   7. High Commission of India, Colombo (@IndiaInSriLanka)
   8. Other (please specify) ……………………………
   9. Do not wish to answer

For questions 15-17, please choose only one option that best represents your opinion on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree).

Q15. In relation to one or more Indian Facebook accounts you selected in the previous question, please respond to what extent you agree or disagree with the following items:

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<th>4</th>
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<th>7</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read their status updates</td>
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<tr>
<td>I watch their photos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I watch their videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I comment on their status updates</td>
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<tr>
<td>I comment on their photos</td>
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<td>I comment on their videos</td>
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<td>I share their status updates</td>
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<td>I share their photos</td>
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<td>I share their videos</td>
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<td>I like their status updates</td>
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<td>I like their photos</td>
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<td>I like their videos</td>
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<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with other followers</td>
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<tr>
<td>I get involved in discussions with the account owners</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q16. I get information about India from the following Indian media sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian movies (Bollywood)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian movies (Bollywood) online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian television serials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian television serials online</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian news channels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian news channels online</td>
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<td>Indian radio stations</td>
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<td>Indian online radio stations</td>
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<td>Indian print newspapers</td>
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<td>Indian online newspapers</td>
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<td>Indian magazines</td>
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<td>Indian online magazines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other sources</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q17. I get information about India from the following media sources originating in my country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movies produced in my country</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television serials produced in my country</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>News channels in my country</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio channels of my country</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

209
Newspapers of my country
Foreign media channels
None of the above
Movies produced in my country
None of the above

Q18. I get information about India from the following social networking sites:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>LinkedIn</td>
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<td>YouTube</td>
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<td>WhatsApp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not wish to answer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q19. On Twitter, how many users are YOU following?

1. None
2. 1-200
3. 201-300
4. 301-500
5. 501-700
6. 701-999
7. 1000 and above
8. Do not wish to answer

Q20. On Twitter, how many users FOLLOW YOU?

1. None
2. 1-200
3. 201-300
4. 301-500
5. 501-700
6. 701-999
7. 1000 and above
8. Do not wish to answer

Q21. On Facebook, how many friends do you have?
1. None
2. 1-200
3. 201-300
4. 301-500
5. 501-700
6. 701-999
7. 1000 and above
8. Do not wish to answer

Q22. How many Indians are you connected with on each of the following social networking sites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-29</th>
<th>30-39</th>
<th>40-49</th>
<th>50 and above</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<td>LinkedIn</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not wish to answer</td>
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</table>
Q23. On an average, how often do you communicate with Indians on the following social networking sites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Networking Sites</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than Once a Month</th>
<th>Once a Month</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Week</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>Do not wish to answer</td>
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</table>

Q24. What is your gender?
1. Male
2. Female
3. Other
999. Do not wish to answer

Q25. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?
1. Employed full time
2. Employed part time
3. Employed, but not working
4. Retired
5. Not employed
6. Other (please specify) ...................
999. Do not wish to answer

Q26. What is your current occupation? *(fill in)*

Thank you for your participation. If you wish to enter the LUCKY DRAW to win one of the 10 Amazon gift cards. Please enter your email address below.
Appendix D: Recruitment Text

Thank you for following me. My name is Nisha Garud. I am collecting data for my doctoral dissertation titled “India's Mediated Public Diplomacy on Social Media: Building Agendas and Reputation in South Asia”. The study is about how the Indian government uses its Twitter and Facebook accounts for diplomatic purposes. I will appreciate if you can assist me in my study by answering a few questions. It will take you less than 20 minutes to answer all questions. If you wish, you can also provide your email address at the end of the survey to participate in a lucky draw and win one of the ten $5 gift cards. Thank you. Please click on the link to participate in the survey: (link was provided).