Evolving Social Media Landscape: Trends and Usage Patterns in Myanmar

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Abstract

This article aims to intensively investigate the changes in the social media environment in Myanmar from January 2023 to January 2024, including trend analysis and usage patterns. Social media has come a long way in the digital age and is now a significant part of the state's communication and content consumption activities. This study examines the degree of participation and popularity of the leading platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. Next, this study explores the functions and importance of underrepresented platforms like Reddit, LinkedIn, Tumblr, VKontakte, and news.ycombinator.com in Myanmar's digital arena. Through recognition of these changes in the preferences of users and new emerging trends, these data give information on social-cultural dynamics and technological advances that lead to social media in Myanmar. The findings not only contribute to academia but also give concrete recommendations to policymakers and industry sector actors, which will help formulate relevant strategies that will facilitate the realization of the social media potential for society and economic development in Myanmar.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, Trends Analysis, Myanmar, Digital Landscape,

Internet Penetration, User Preferences

1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, marked by rapid technological advancements and increasing connectivity, the influence of social media on societies worldwide has become undeniable. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Myanmar, a country undergoing significant socio-political changes amidst a digital revolution. As internet access becomes more widespread, social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for communication, information dissemination, and cultural exchange. Scholars have observed that the rise of social media in Myanmar has been swift and profound, reshaping the country's socio-political landscape in unprecedented ways (Jones, 2014). With the success of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, people from Myanmar can now connect with people worldwide to form a global digital community. Such democratization of information has allowed citizens to participate in online discussions, share their views, and be part of public debates. The study of social media in Myanmar is demonstrated in many ways, such as its ability to connect people for political activism, promote cultural exchange, and give voice to the voiceless through the amplification. (Yusoph, n.d.). This study, together with the opportunities afforded by digital connectivity, social media in Myanmar has also brought about a range of encounters and complexities. (Ananth & Narrain, 2023). Moreover, worries about privacy violations, data security, and digital literacy have emerged as pressing issues amidst Myanmar's digital transformation(Vasishta & Kapoor, 2024). The research community has emphasized the need to examine the sociocultural process and the technological influences behind Myanmar's social media usage. The analysts try to answer those questions by studying the usage patterns and trends across different platforms. Thus, they come to an understanding of what drives the behavior of Myanmar's internet users.(Ahmad & Halim, 2017) Additionally, by exploring the role of lesser-known platforms within Myanmar's digital ecosystem, researchers seek to uncover the distinctions and complexities of the country's social media landscape (Biswas, 2023).

This research paper is based on the main objective, which is to contribute remarkably to understanding the media history in Myanmar. Through careful data analysis, which is accumulated from January 2023 to January 2024, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the patterns and complexities of social media behavior across the country.

This study explores the number of users on different social media platforms. Our research endeavors to go beyond the surface-level understanding of social media usage by investigating the complications of user behaviors and inspirations. By identifying emerging trends and discerning shifts in user preferences, this study aspires to provide valuable foresight to policymakers, industry stakeholders, and civil society actors.

This study on social media usage in Myanmar reveals the social impact of digital connectivity on the culture. This study discovered how online platforms are used for cultural exchange, identity formation, and community building in Myanmar through our research. This research does not purely stop at identifying trends and challenges but extends toward proposing potential solutions and strategies. In essence, our study is driven by an assurance to foster a profound consideration of the varied nature of social media use in Myanmar. By contributing wide-ranging insights, actionable recommendations, and informed perspectives, this study aspires to qualify stakeholders to navigate the problem of the digital landscape successfully. Through our actions, this study aims to pay sensibly to the discourse surrounding social media's role in making Myanmar's socio-cultural fabric and driving wide-ranging development in the digital era.

2. Literature Review

The appearance and increase of social media platforms have made communication patterns, societal dynamics, and information dissemination universal (Arts & Nair, 2023; Fazil et al., 2024). In Myanmar, a nation experiencing rapid technological development, the influence of social media on numerous characteristics of society has garnered significant consideration from researchers, industry stakeholders, and policymakers ⌞OBJ⌟. Researchers have broadly understood the developing social media landscape in Myanmar, evaluating trends, usage shapes, and the socio-cultural consequences of digital connectivity.

A study (Faxon et al., 2023) looked into the impact of Facebook on political communication and the rise of social movements in Myanmar. Platforms like these study how they could, among other things, help shape or reshape public opinion, stimulate people's activism, and even make them interfere directly in politics, especially during times of political upheaval. Similarly,(Lukito et al., 2023) This paper explored the role of social media in youth

participation and civic engagement in Myanmar, particularly the growing significance of channels such as Facebook and Twitter in triggering youth-driven projects and grassroots movements to put back into the hands of young people. Other than the political effect, social media has also changed cultural and social values as this study as the way the identity develops in Myanmar. A study by (Ansar & Maitra, 2024) analyzes the effects of social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter on the participation and social engagement of youth across Myanmar, highlighting contributions of youth-led movements and grassroots activities for the cause. Besides the political effect, social media has also changed cultural and social values as the way the identity develops in Myanmar. (Huang & Rust, 2017). The spread of wrong information, hate dialogue, and violent incitement have also highlighted concerns about social media in Myanmar. A study by (Lukito et al., 2023) Analyzed how the widespread dissemination of hate speech on Facebook in Myanmar can create disharmony among social groups and cause problems in the country. Authors considered giving a high value to fighting of cyberbullying and raising the level of digital literacy to how people act online and make them behave responsibly.

Moreover, the digital division and unbalanced contact with social media carriage challenges wide-ranging development and digital nationality in Myanmar. Research by (Vereen et al., 2023) surveying the imbalances of the internet and social media concerning the different demographic groups calls for the crafting of policy guidelines to provide the means through which equal society can access digital resources and prospects. Therefore, researchers assert that the multi-stakeholder and evidence-based communication through social media would contribute to the platform for social unity and its citizens' empothis studyrment in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The studies by (Vereen et al., 2023) emphasized on developing digital skills, ensuring their online safety, and promoting responsible use of social media by citizens. The goal is to help mitigate the risks that come with its use and leverage digital channels for economic growth and societal study of Myanmar. It is in the essence of the discussion on the social media landscape in Myanmar that this study understands the influence of digital communication on society, its profound capacity for positive transformation, and the concerning elicited problems. Through their research and analysis conducted on a scholarly level, scholars have shown that social media platforms have observed a fundamental role in

forming communication patterns, cultural sharing, and making people feel like a community. Furthermore, be it that scholars in various fields have exposed the threats emanating from the explosion on the internet harboring fake news, hate speech, and the digital divide with implications for the social order and democratic framework.

Social media has its challenges, but the literature also reveals numerous opportunities for initiating inclusive development in society and social change (Hietschold et al., 2023). First, the way social media channels the flow of information and the expressions of people who otherwise might have been forgotten may be considered revolutionary. Secondly, social media as a way of civic participation is now accessible to more people. As social media is the primary catalyst of raising issues related to cultural patronage and preservation, as thriving activism, there is an evident conclusion that it has an immense capacity to drive the growth of socially desirable developments (Wu et al., 2023).

For institutions to truly exploit the initiatives of social media, there is a need for evidence-based research and collaborations leading to solutions to the main challenges and, thereby, identification of the potential benefits. This can be done by promoting digital literacy, developing responsible online behavior, and erecting targeted shields against misinformation and hate speech to address the downsides and maximize the gains from social media use for societal change. Also, maintaining multi-stakeholder partnerships and other vital social media factors as a tool for positive change in Myanmar and beyond shall encourage a culture of dialogue and cooperation. With joint efforts and intended interventions, the actors can design a society that emphasizes inclusivity, equity, and resilience, using social media to achieve more significant positive goals.

3. Problem statement and research question.

The problem statement for this paper revolves around understanding the patterns of social media usage across different platforms in Myanmar. Specifically, more comprehensive research is needed on how individuals engage with various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, within the country's digital landscape.

In light of this, this paper's research question is: How do individuals in Myanmar utilize different social media platforms, and what factors influence their usage patterns? This question investigates the distinction of social media usage behaviors among Myanmar's population, exploring technological access. By addressing this research question, the paper seeks to provide insights into the diverse ways in which individuals engage with social media platforms and inform strategies for optimizing user experiences and maximizing the benefits of social media in Myanmar.

4. Conceptual Framework

At its principal, the model seeks to explore the complex dynamics of social media engagement in Myanmar by separating it into three main branches: Platform-Specific Variables, Temporal Factors, and Multimedia Influence. In discussing Platform-Specific Variables, this study refers to each social media category, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, in an individual social media platform. Each platform has its distinctive system, which is composed of characteristics such as particular functional elements like interface designs and the variability of content types. Platform-specific factors, including content retention and engagement, are our prime targets. Exploring the underlying use patterns across diverse platforms will help us identify more specific preferences. Facebook's functionality and design can have a different impact on engagement behavior than Instagram's visual-oriented or Twitter's real-time modes of communication. Mastering these particular points is the key factor that should provide a deep comprehension of the structure of social media usage trends in Myanmar.

Temporal Factors constitute another vital aspect of the model, exploring the chronological factors influencing social media user feedback. Factors such as the time of day or the day of the week possess a strong impact on the user's modes of behavior and how the service is used. From this segment of the model, this study sees that these temporal factors are significant as they can influence how an individual interacts with a message due to having work schedules, leisure time, and cultural differences. Social media platforms can be resolved from the perspective of temporal factors in Myanmar as researchers can reveal peak engagement times and the patterns that define users' interactions. The field of multimedia influences visual ability

and uniqueness as the main concepts in social media traffic. While some elements like images and videos, as the variety of the content, are of the most significant importance regarding the ability to catch a user's heart and maintain their interest, others also play a particular role. Knowledge of the balance of visual appeal and content variation generates clues toward developing content strategies that are appealing and informative to the audience of the digital world of Myanmar.

This model combines the aforementioned three dimensions to form a three-dimensional system to assess social media utilization patterns in Myanmar with a comprehensive approach. It presents a more comprehensive view of the franchise and multi-layer factors that affect user interactions, supplying the basis for progress and other tactical optimizations in social media campaigns. In the end, the model provides researchers and practitioners with a tool that will enable them to engage and manage the social media landscape in Myanmar efficiently; that is, it helps them understand the dynamics involved and its complexities as its potencies.
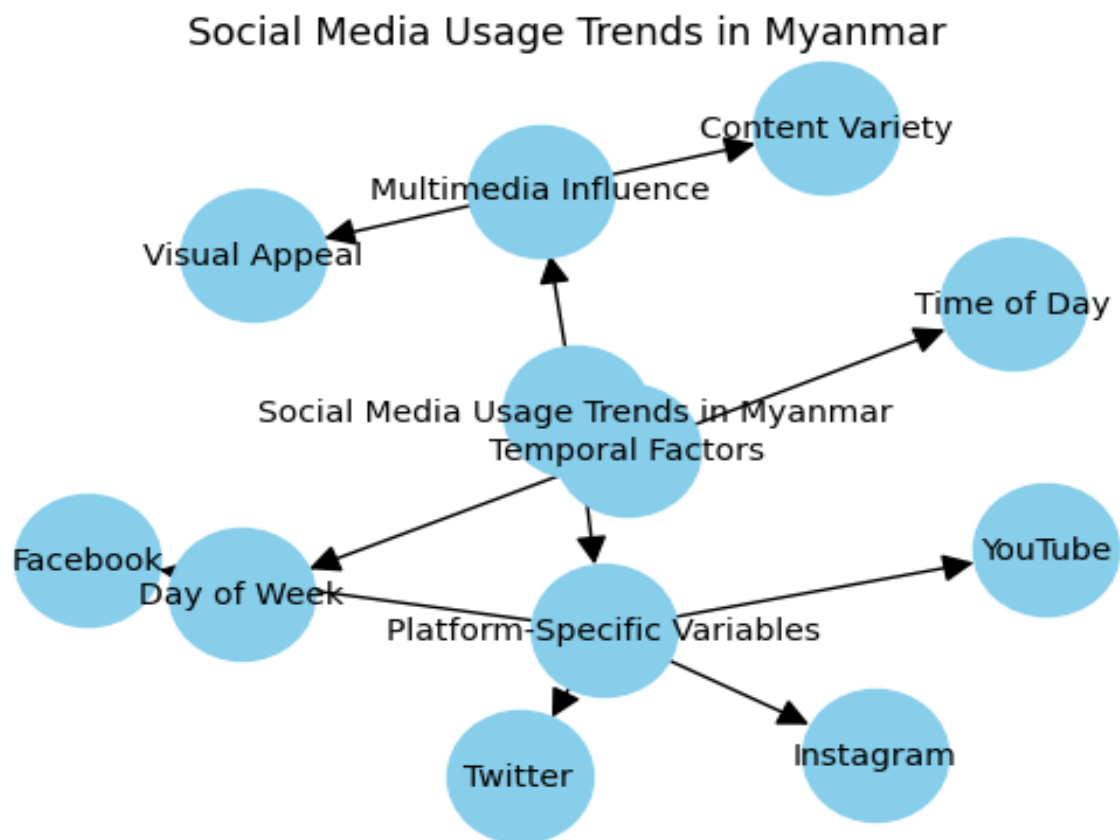

Figure 1: Conceptual framework

5. Research methodology

We begin by gathering relevant data on social media usage in Myanmar from credible sources. This includes obtaining access to reliable datasets that provide insights into the usage patterns of various social media platforms over a specified period.

Then, we have a search to assess the level of social media engagement in Myanmar; data spanning from January 2023 to January 2024 was sourced from StatCounter Global Stats[1]. This dataset was augmented with platform-specific statistics from credible sources like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Discrepancies and trends in social media usage across platforms were identified by meticulously comparing these datasets. The findings of this comparative analysis and detailed results presented in Table 1 and Graph 2 are expounded upon in the Results and Conclusion sections.
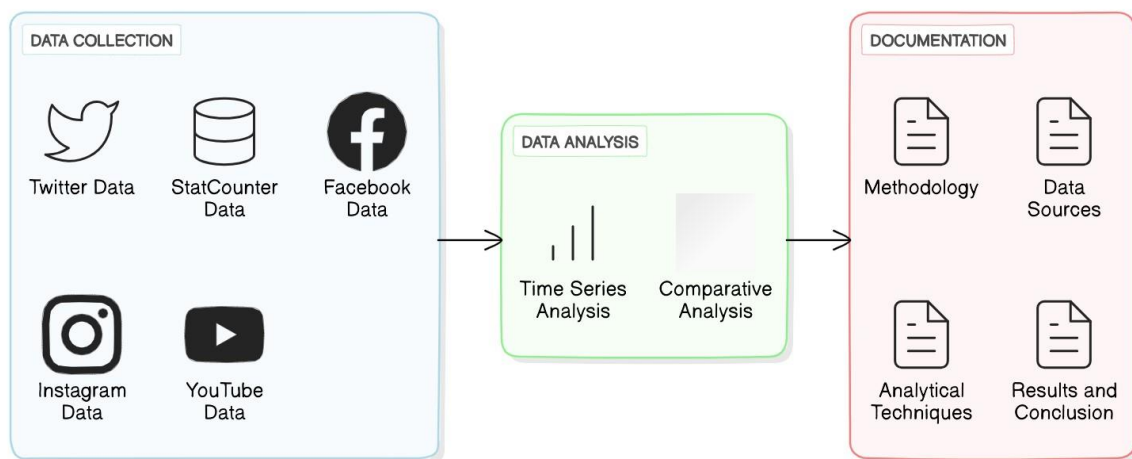

Figure 2: Graphical representation of methodology

We conduct a time series analysis to explore how social media usage trends evolve. This involves plotting the data over sequential time intervals (e.g., months) to visualize trends and detect any seasonality or long-term patterns. We maintain transparency and rigor throughout the analysis process by documenting our methodology, data sources, and analytical techniques. This allows for reproducibility and ensures the validity and reliability of our findings. Our

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[1] StatCounter Global Stats (https://gs.statcounter.com/).

methodology integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively analyze social media usage trends in Myanmar, providing valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.

6. Trends of Social Media In Myanmar

In Myanmar, social media continues to be dominated by Facebook despite increasing usage of alternative platforms like Twitter and Instagram, particularly among urban youth and activists. There has been heightened censorship and government control over online platforms, leading to challenges in digital literacy and the spread of misinformation[2]. Despite this, social media remains a crucial tool for digital resistance and activism, facilitating the organization of protests and disseminating information about human rights abuses. Economic opportunities exist for businesses, but political instability has hampered growth and development. The data table (see Table 1) provides a detailed insight into the social media landscape in Myanmar over a detailed period. It's evident that Facebook positions out as the leading platform, consistently capturing the attention of a noteworthy percentage of the population, with usage ranging from around 63.56% to 69.33%. This leads to the inference that Facebook continues to be a foundation for social interaction, communication, and online content consumption among internet users in Myanmar. Towards the end of the period, the use of Instagram may be seen to be steadily increasing on the whole, which reflects more and more people starting to use it for various posts, such as stories and reels, that are eye-catching might be the leading cause of the growing number of its users. As its use percentages have changed slightly from 8% to 12%, Twitter has become a platform for sharing updates, news postings, and discussions among social media users in Myanmar. Despite Facebook and Instagram user base numbers, tiny Pinterest is successfully attracting people interested in excellent visual content, confirmed by its 5-8% swing in usage rates.

In contrast, YouTube has witnessed a reliable tendency to rise, proving its growing popularity as an all-embracing content distributor, enticing the audience by offering different

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[2] Lim, M. (2023). From activist media to algorithmic politics: the internet, social media, and civil society in Southeast Asia. In Routledge Handbook of Civil and Uncivil Society in Southeast Asia (pp. 25-44). Routledge.

types of content, including entertainment, educative resources, and tutorials, to audiences of all kinds. Contrarily, this study's sites, such as Reddit, LinkedIn, Tumblr, VKontakte, Fark, and news.ycombinator.com, do not occupy big percentages of the digital platform, which indicates that the traffic of these social networking sites is less in Myanmar compared with the daily paid-up social media platforms. The overall data reflected the changing habits and users' preferences, which are driven by technological advancements, cultural elements, and global trends, having a significant influence on the social media scene in Myanmar.

Table 1: Social Media Usage Trends in Myanmar

Date	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Pinterest	YouTube	reddit	LinkedIn	Tumblr	VKontakte	Fark	news.ycom	Other
2023-01	66.9	9.62	12.36	6.05	3.61	0.52	0.53	0.24	0.1	0.01	0.02	0.03
2023-02	69.33	9.74	10.46	5.76	3.57	0.42	0.33	0.21	0.09	0.02	0.03	0.03
2023-03	67.41	11.04	10.35	6.09	3.89	0.45	0.4	0.2	0.09	0.02	0.02	0.03
2023-04	66.31	11.94	11.49	5.54	3.49	0.46	0.36	0.23	0.1	0.02	0.02	0.03
2023-05	65.7	12.63	11.44	5.24	3.74	0.45	0.4	0.27	0.1	0.02	0.01	0.02
2023-06	63.94	13.93	12.1	4.78	3.98	0.46	0.43	0.23	0.08	0.02	0.02	0.02
2023-07	65.78	14.32	8.85	5.96	3.78	0.58	0.4	0.2	0.09	0.01	0	0.02
2023-08	66.91	13.05	8.38	6.35	3.96	0.62	0.4	0.2	0.08	0.02	0	0.01
2023-09	65.24	13.31	8.75	7.28	4	0.52	0.44	0.2	0.22	0.02	0	0.02
2023-10	65.15	12.05	8.75	8.47	4.43	0.37	0.48	0.21	0.07	0.02	0	0.01
2023-11	63.56	11.38	8.49	10.02	5.02	0.64	0.54	0.24	0.08	0.02	0	0.01
2023-12	64.79	10.03	7.75	9.97	5.88	0.7	0.55	0.22	0.07	0.03	0.01	0.01
2024-01	66.22	9.71	7.28	8.18	6.88	0.76	0.62	0.21	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.01

Source: Stat counter Global Stats; https://gs.statcounter.com/

The graph (see Figure 2) narrates the social media usage trend in Myanmar across 13 months, from January 2023 to January 2024, in detail. Each line on the chart is on a different social media platform, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, or YouTube. Taking an example of these lines, this study can see the patterns of usage percentages over time for each of these platforms. For instance, Facebook usage demonstrates a slight decrease in the beginning months following this study by a plateau steadiness, whereas Instagram usage has shown gradual progress in the entire review of the study time frames. Twitter activity seems to sway with waves, exhibiting rises and falls hourly, which reflects short-term changing interest

levels. The graph allows us to highlight dissimilarities between this study's various social networks. For example, Facebook remains the most popular choice for users, with the following platforms - Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. So, this study can identify and refer to diverse levels of popularity and engagement across different platforms in the context of the media landscape of Myanmar. Investigating the total trend across all platforms allows this study to discern broader social media usage trends in Myanmar. For instance, increased or decreased social media action periods may coincide with external events or seasonal variations. The graph provides a comprehensive overview of social media usage patterns in Myanmar, allowing for in-depth analysis and vision into the preferences and behaviors of internet users in the country.
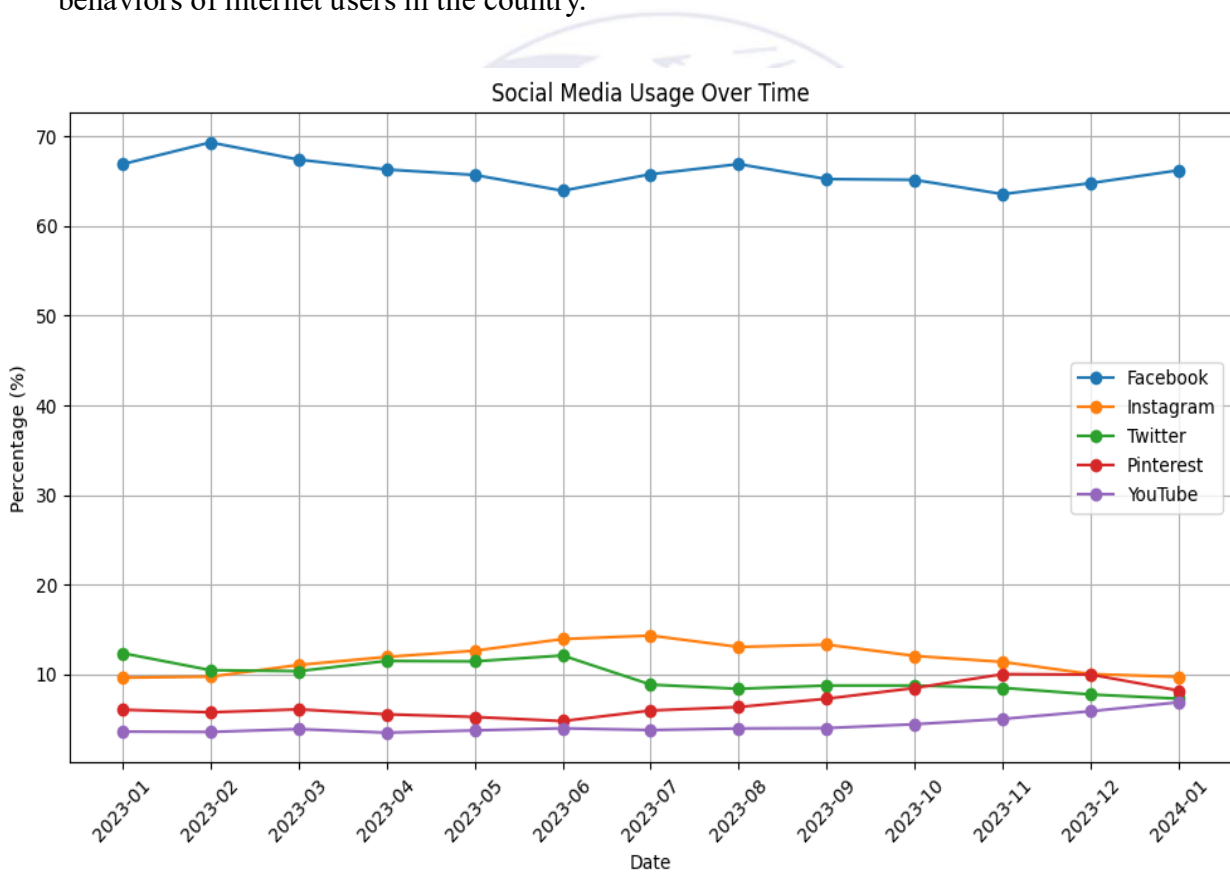

Figure 3: Trends in Social Media Usage Over Time in Myanmar

Source: Stat counter Global Stats; https://gs.statcounter.com

7. Social Media Usage Pattern in Myanmar

A stacked bar graph (see Figure 3) tracks social media usage statistics, reflecting the number of active users on global and local platforms. This data has been obtained over one year. Every

bar represents a month, and the length of segments within the bar illustrates the proportion of media channels this study garners different audiences. Upon careful review of the graph, this study will see whether specific patterns related to social media utilization prevail over time. To illustrate this, it is enough to look at the growing popularity of particular platforms in different months; you might find that Facebook or Instagram are more popular than others. The color-coded bars help distinguish various platforms, which leads to a clear visual picture of the relative contribution of each platform to the overall ecosystem of social media. Furthermore, the layered representation of the bars allows us to use the performance of platforms over time, for example, a decrease or an increase in the use of platforms. In general, it gives us a general picture of the dynamics of social media usage in Myanmar, which will deepen our knowledge about the country's digital ecosystem and user behavior.
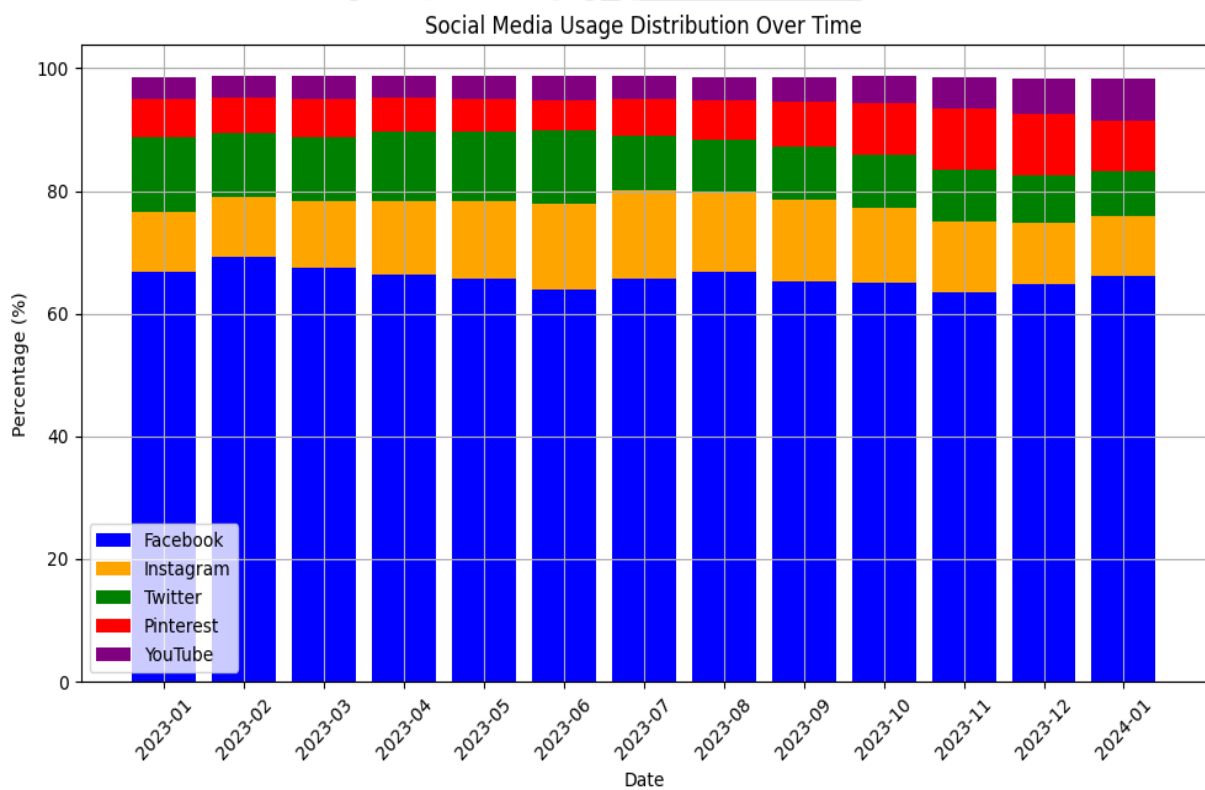

Figure 4: Social Media Usage Distribution in Myanmar

8. Average Social Media Usage Distribution in Myanmar

The pie chart for social media use (see Figure 4) clearly illustrates the distribution of social media usage on different platforms in Myanmar. Each part of the pie corresponds to a different

platform, like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube. The size of the fragments is proportional to the average social media usage distribution amongst these platforms on a given time interval. This comparison by the size of the slices will be very helpful in understanding which platforms are more common in average usage in Myanmar. Also, the percentages beside the slices provide the exact information about how much average time is spent on each platform, thus making it easy to understand and compare. The overall visualization provides a straightforward comprehension of the most widely used social media platforms in Myanmar and the usages and preferences of the users in this digital environment.
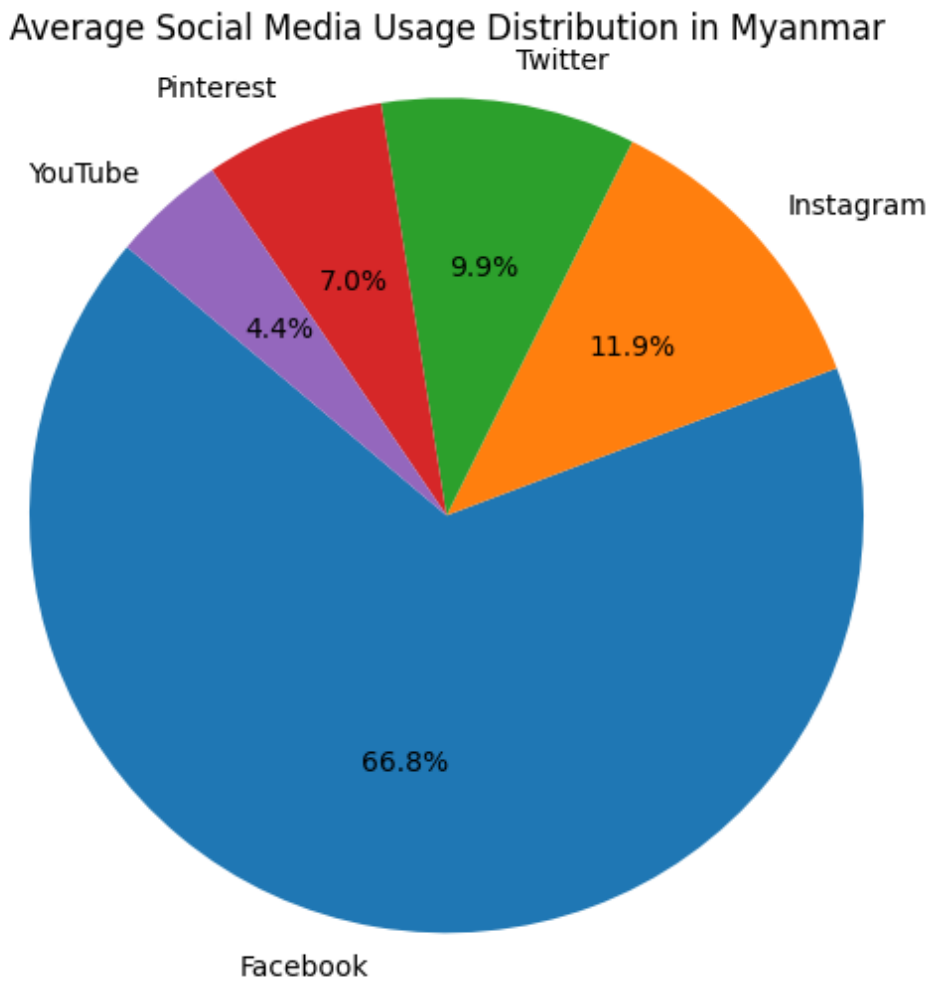

Figure 5: Average Usage Distribution in Myanmar

9. Conclusion

In the discussion section of this research paper, we explore the insights gleaned from the analysis of social media usage trends in Myanmar. We explore the implications of the observed patterns and fluctuations, contextualize the findings within the broader socio-cultural landscape of Myanmar, and discuss the potential implications for various stakeholders.

Firstly, we reflect on Facebook's dominance as Myanmar's most widely used social media platform, with consistently high usage percentages throughout the observed period. We discuss the potential reasons behind Facebook's popularity, such as its early adoption, widespread accessibility, and diverse functionalities. Additionally, we explore the implications of Facebook's dominance for communication, information dissemination, and social interaction among Myanmar's population.

Next, we examine the increasing popularity of platforms like Instagram and YouTube, which have shown upward trends in usage percentages over time. We discuss the factors driving the growth of these platforms, such as their visual-centric nature, appeal to younger demographics, and the rise of influencer culture. We also explore the implications of this trend for content creators, marketers, and advertisers seeking to leverage these platforms for engagement and outreach in Myanmar. Further, we discovered the fluctuations observed in the usage percentages of platforms like Twitter and Pinterest. We analyze the potential factors contributing to these fluctuations, such as changes in user demographics, shifts in cultural preferences, and the emergence of new platforms or technologies. We discuss the implications of these fluctuations for platform viability, user engagement strategies, and the overall diversity of the Myanmar social media landscape.

In the end, we replicate the limitations of our study, such as the reliance on aggregated data and the absence of qualitative insights from users. We discuss avenues for future research, including longitudinal studies, qualitative interviews, and comparative analyses with other countries or regions. The discussion section synthesizes the key findings of our research, contextualizes them within the broader landscape of social media usage in Myanmar, and provides insights for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to understand and navigate the complexities of digital communication in the country.

10. Future Research

As future research turns, it will be worthwhile to traverse various paths that will help us better comprehend social media use in Myanmar. For one, longitudinal studies can offer insights into the long-term trends and dynamics of social media use, allowing researchers to follow up on changes over time and pick trending patterns. Furthermore, qualitative methods like interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic studies could give a more profound and nuanced understanding of the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of social media users in Myanmar, presenting the specific social-cultural context that shaped their engagement.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not receive any financial assistance from any institution.

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