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A Study on Influence of Social Media in Shaping Investor Behaviour

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ABSTRACT: In the age of digitalization, social media platforms have turned into focal points for data sharing, which includes money matters and investment guidance. This research investigates how social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Telegram shape retail investors' decision-making process in India. Based on a survey given to a representative sample of investors, we analyze the platforms most used for financial information, the level of confidence in online views, and the behavioural biases herd behaviour, fear of missing out (FOMO) and overconfidence that are initiated by viral content. Our results indicate that most respondents routinely check at least one social media platform prior to investment decisions, frequently placing speed and convenience over conventional sources. Although numerous investors remain leery of unsubstantiated tips, sheer numbers and instant access all too often trump prudence and generate rash purchases or sales. We also reveal significant variation by age and experience levels: younger investors are more likely to make trend-driven moves, while experienced players are more likely to cross-check information. Drawing on these findings, we suggest common-sense advice for retail investors to meet agility with prudence, and we propose how platforms and regulators could work together to flag untrustworthy content and encourage financial education.

KEYWORDS: Social media, financial education, Investment Decision, Investors' decision-making

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the dynamics of information sharing in India have been drastically altered as a result of the very fast increase in the availability of inexpensive smartphones and high-speed mobile internet. As of 2024, India has over 800 million smartphone users and over 600 million active social media accounts, and it is the world's fastest-growing digital market.¹ Concurrently, retail involvement in the Indian equity markets has mounted: demat accounts have increased from approximately 30 million in 2018 to over 100 million as of mid-2025, indicating a new generation of first-time investors.² Against this framework, social media platforms have come to serve as more than social networking tools alone, but as fully-fledged financial information centres.

India has witnessed a digital revolution such as no other in the last decade. With the boom of low-cost smartphones, mass mobile internet penetration, and cheap data plans, the nation is now among the top highest in mobile data consumption in the world. Penetration of the internet has penetrated deep into Tier-II and Tier-III cities, with over 800 million internet users and over 490 million active social media users in the country. This transformation has not only changed communication, education, and entertainment but has also transformed the way young people interact with financial markets.

At the same time, India's stock market has seen a retail investing boom. Trading apps such as Zerodha, Groww, Upstox, and Angel One have made it very easy to participate in the stock market, even for novices. Consequently, millions of new, first-time investors, particularly from non-metro cities, have flooded into the market in recent years. The demat accounts in India have grown exponentially, more than 17 crores by mid-2025. The retail investor journey, which was once controlled by financial advisors and conventional brokers, is now increasingly influenced by mobile applications, YouTube videos, Instagram reels, and Telegram channels.

This shift is most evident in Tier-II cities like Hubli-Dharwad, which are rapidly turning into knowledge and investment centres. With a low illiteracy rate, scores of colleges and universities, and an educationally booming student population, Hubli-Dharwad is the vision of young, digitally equipped India. The area is home to thousands of

undergraduate as well as postgraduate students, many of whom are set to get introduced to the world of personal finance, stock markets, and cryptocurrency for the first time. Their use of social media sites—coupled with curiosity and aspirations—places them in a best-positioned group to learn how online content influences investment choices.

Social media as a Financial Guide

Social media has transformed from a place of enjoyment and association into a large source of education, awareness, and even fiscal advice. Channels such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter (X), Telegram, and even WhatsApp groups are now filled with stock trading, mutual fund, cryptocurrency, IPO, and financial literacy content. They feature influencers called "finfluencers" who dissect difficult-to-understand financial subjects into easy, entertaining bite-sized content. From 1-minute clips to investment explanations that go on for hours, social media has made it easier than ever to learn about finance.

For young people in Hubli–Dharwad, this availability is a paradigm shift. Conventional financial learning is incomplete or academic, particularly at the undergraduate level. Social media, on the other hand, offers hands-on, real-time, and peer-verified information something young investors identify with closely. Most students now consult them prior to their inaugural investments, believing what the influencer or the prominent Telegram chat groups say more than what they read in books or financial papers.

However, this convenience comes with consequences. The very nature of social media fast-paced, visually appealing, and emotionally engaging can lead to hasty and uninformed investment decisions. Trends, memes, and viral posts often overshadow logic and long-term planning. It is here that the role of behavioural finance becomes crucial.

Behavioural Biases Amplified by social media

Behavioural finance explores how mental biases affect investor choices. In the case of social media, some biases are much more magnified:

Herd Behaviour: When people see crowds of others discussing or investing in a given stock or cryptocurrency, they feel compelled to do the same. This bandwagon phenomenon results in mass purchasing or selling, irrespective of fundamentals.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): Spreading posts about instant gains or "multi-bagger" stocks induce FOMO in young people. Witnessing friends posting successful trades creates anxiety and hasty investment decisions.

Overconfidence: Young investors usually overestimate their knowledge and abilities, particularly after a few winning trades. Social media facilitates this by only showing success tales, giving an impression that everyone is earning money with ease.

Anchoring: Investors tend to hold on to the initial price or viewpoint they hear about a stock, typically from some influencer or social media update, and use as their standard of comparison—despite having access to improved data.

Such biases, if not moderated, can result in poor investment decisions, excessive risk-taking, or selling at the wrong time in case of market reversals. It is reported that most retail investors in India incur losses despite market appreciation, mainly due to emotionally motivated choices. The problem is greater among young first-generation investors who are still learning about markets and who are more active on online platforms.

Hubli–Dharwad A Regional Profile

While a great deal of research has concentrated on metros such as Bengaluru, Mumbai, or Delhi, there is a lack of academic study into the impact of social media on investors in Tier-II cities. Hubli–Dharwad, as a significant academic and commercial hub of North Karnataka, is particularly well-situated for such a study. The twin cities have witnessed an increase in financial activity and interest in markets amongst students and young professionals. Mobile access to the internet, financial literacy, and curiosity about money are increasing, but formal financial education remains behind.

Additionally, as compared to urban metros, where investors could be provided with face-to-face financial advisors or advanced education, youth in cities like Hubli–Dharwad are typically more reliant upon what they observe online. Such

reliance provides fertile soil for learning as well as misinformation. Knowing how social media shapes their behaviour will assist in crafting superior financial literacy programs as well as inform policy interventions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of Social Media in Shaping Investor Behaviour

In the contexts and dynamics of retail investing in India, social media has recently emerged as a big influencer. The review here synthesizes important Indian studies to show how platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, and online forums shape the awareness, biases, and selection of individual investors.

1. Platforms and Information Sources

Subramanian & Prerana (2021) surveyed young adults in Bengaluru and found that the investors do increasingly rely on a mix of short-form memes, and long-form analysis, YouTube tutorials, and channels on Telegram, for stock tips and commentary on the markets. Their findings emphasise that the ease of access and informal nature of social media are more compelling to the audience than conventional media; however, the content seen on social media is most often not verified or is sensationalised in nature.

Kavitha & Bhuvaneswari (2017) studied equity investors in Coimbatore and found that over 70% used social media mainly to get industry news and updates and not so much for thorough fundamental analysis. Their weighted ranking exercise had shown YouTube and Twitter taking the lead as sources of breaking news with Instagram getting preference for bite-sized "market mood"

2. Behavioural Biases Exacerbated by Social Media

A common finding in the literature is that social media does not simply deliver information; it physically amplifies behavioural biases:

Herd Behaviour & FOMO: Sharma (2020) and Balu Sagar et al. (2023) propagate that viral posts and trending hashtags cultivate the environment in which people develop FOMO. In Balu Sagar's empirical study involving 243 investors, 60% of them admitted they had got into a position just because "everyone else was doing it."

Overconfidence & Authority Bias: Akhtar et al. (2023) used the Theory of Planned Behaviour to illustrate this overconfidence for Northern Indian investors. They found that content with high levels of engagement from verified influencers or those with considerable following induced overconfidence. More precisely, in their model, subjects repeatedly exposed to bullish messages highly rated their market timing abilities.

Anchoring & Regret Aversion: Nain et al. (2025), applying Structural Equation Modelling on a sample of 552 retail investors, found that initial price points shared in posts (for example, "buy at ₹300") would anchor subsequent decisions. When combined with regret aversion—regret of missing gains—often that would become holding on to losing positions for too long, or chasing stocks beyond sensible levels of entry.

3. Demographic Moderators

The few authors so far have considered the effect of age, gender, and financial literacy on susceptibility to social media-induced biases:

Gender Differences: Setyadi et al. (2025) affirming the Indonesian viewpoint observed that females who had a higher degree of financial literacy were somehow protected against spontaneously induced posts—a finding similarly agreed upon by Subramanian & Prerana among Indian millennials insofar as women were least inclined to act upon unverified tips.

Age & Experience: In a study conducted with 270 equity investors in Uttar Pradesh, through ANOVA and Factor Analysis, Sao, Kumar & Singh (2021) revealed that younger investors (less than 30 years of age) registered significantly higher herd behaviour scores; conversely, the more experienced investors seemed to verify the information through cross-checking with financial news portals.

4. Reliability Perceptions and Regulatory Implications

Bhattacharya investigated the trust that these financial influencers command and found that social media advice was rated as "highly reliable" only by a mere 12 per cent of retail investors (2023). Setting aside the scepticism is there are a lot of investors being caught in constant streams of content, poor due diligence, and repeated reliance.

Parmar and Javiya (2023) pointed out that technical analysis and macroeconomic news shared on social media positively affected decision quality. In contrast, opinion-based posts caused unstable "momentum trading" instead of encouraging long-term investment strategies.

These findings suggest a rising demand for platform regulation and verified-content labels. These measures could help investors tell the difference between opinion, factual analysis, and promotional material.

III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

"To examine the role of social media in shaping the investment behaviour of young investors in the Hubli–Dharwad region."

Objectives

1. To Identify which social media platforms are most used for financial information among youth in Hubli–Dharwad.
2. To understand the level of trust investors place in content shared by influencers, peers, and online groups.
3. To Discuss the influence of demographic variables on investors decision making style.

Hypothesis

- H₁: There is a significant relationship between age and investment decision making.
H₂: There is a significant relationship between gender and investment decision making.
H₃: There is a significant relationship between education level and investment decision making.
H₄: There is a significant relationship between income level and investment decision making.
H₅: There is a significant relationship between daily time spent on social media and investment decision making.
H₆: There is a significant relationship between the number of social media platforms used and investment decision-making.
H₇: There is a significant relationship between the following financial influencers and investment decision-making.
H₈: There is a significant relationship between participation in finance-related groups and investment decision making.
H₉: There is a significant relationship between trust in social media financial content and investment decision making.
H₁₀: There is a significant relationship between perceived ease of understanding social media financial content and investment decision making.
H₁₁: There is a significant relationship between decision confidence after consuming social media advice and investment decision making.
H₁₂: There is a significant relationship between verifying social media information and investment decision-making.
H₁₃: There is a significant relationship between platform diversity (number of platforms) and investment decision making.
H₁₄: There is a significant relationship between exposure to misleading content and investment decision making.
H₁₅: There is a significant relationship between the influence of social media and investment decisions
H₁₆: Exposure to misleading or false content on social media has no significant effect on investment decision making
H₁₇: There is a significant relation between the objective of investment and different Investment Avenues
H₁₈: Exposure to misleading or false content on social media has a significant effect on investment decision-making
H₁₉: There is a significant relation between the use of Social Media Platform and Social Media Trust

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**Table 1:**

Research Methodology	Exploratory method
Population	Investors
Sampling technique	Convenient Sampling
Sampling size	209
Data collection	Primary data collection
Sampling technique	Questionnaire

Exploratory Method

Exploratory research is crucial for understanding the impact of fintech on financial literacy. This approach enables the identification of new patterns and trends, providing a clearer conceptual framework. It also provides for the use of qualitative research techniques like interviews or focus groups with fintech users. This method will help in understanding the subtle details behind fintech's influence on financial literacy, laying the groundwork for more comprehensive studies.

Sampling technique: Convenient Sampling

The Questionnaires are sent to Friends and family members who have made investments. They are given time to fill them up and send the self-completed form back to the researcher using Google Form.

Sample Collected - 209

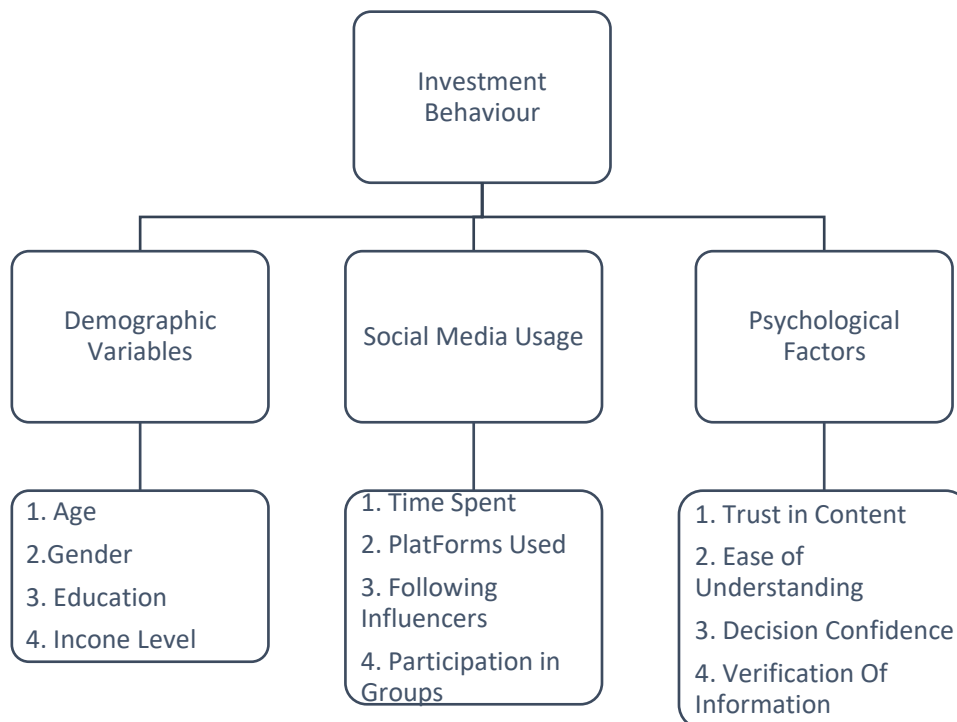
Data collection method

The primary data collection method is the survey method, a widely used approach to gather information from specific groups through structured questionnaires or interviews. It can be conducted using face-to-face, telephone, online, or mail methods, depending on the target population, budget, and research objectives.

Software tools to be used: SPSS, MS WORD

Investment Behaviour Model

Table 2:



V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 3: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
20-25	52	16.7	25.0
26-30	36	11.5	42.3
31-35	29	9.3	56.3
36-40	51	16.3	80.8
41-45	11	3.5	86.1
46-50	15	4.8	93.3
50 above	14	4.5	100.0
Total	208	66.7	

Table 4: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	116	37.2	55.8
Female	92	29.5	100.0
Total	208	66.7	

Table 5: Education

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
SSLC	21	6.7	40.1
PUC	18	5.8	45.8
Under graduation	63	20.2	66.0
Post Graduation	106	34.0	100.0
Total	312	100.0	

Table 6: Income Level

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 5 lk	115	36.9	55.3
5-10 lk	37	11.9	73.1
11-15 lk	18	5.8	81.7
16-20 lk	16	5.1	89.4
20 lk above	22	7.1	100.0
Total	208	66.7	

The 280 people who responded to the survey were predominantly young, educated, and middle-class. The sample is made up of 51% graduates, 27% undergraduates, and 21% postgraduates, which shows that the group is well-educated. Females make up 55% of the respondents, indicating a slight gender imbalance. The majority (70%) are between the ages of 18 and 35, which shows that most of them are young. Most people in this area make between Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 35,000, which is a sign that they are middle-class. In general, the sample is made up of young, educated, and financially savvy people who are probably active in digital and investment spaces

Normality Test

H_0 – The Investment Decisions of Respondents follow a normal distribution

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Investment Decision	0.204	208	0.000

From the above table test of normality p-value is < 0.05 , so we reject H_0 and respondents do not follow a normal distribution.

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.733	9

From the table, we can say that the data is valid as the Cronbach's alpha value is more than 0.7

VI. CHI-SQUARE TEST

Table 7:

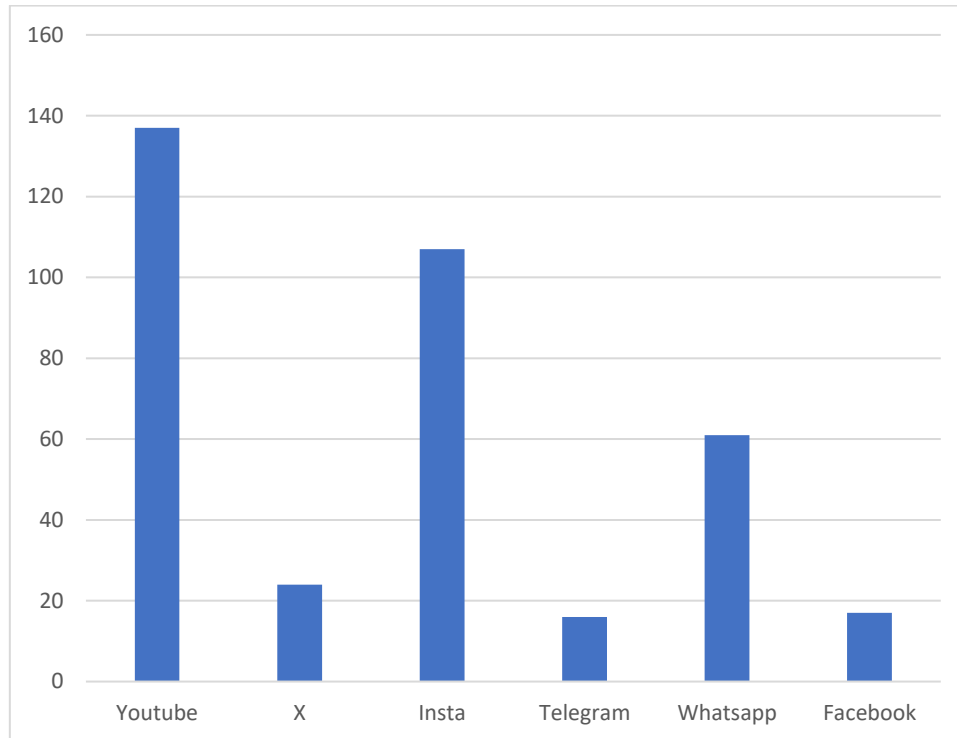
	Hypotheses	p Value	df	Result
1	There is no significant relationship between age and investment decision-making.	0.952	28	H ₀ Accepted
2	There is no significant relationship between gender and investment decision-making	0.357	4	H ₀ Accepted
3	There is a significant relationship between education level and investment decision-making	0.009	12	H ₃ Accepted
4	There is a significant relationship between income level and investment decision-making.	0.026	16	H ₄ Accepted
5	There is a significant relationship between following financial influencers and investment decision-making.	0	16	H ₅ Accepted
6	There is a significant relationship between participation in finance-related groups and investment decision-making	0	16	H ₆ Accepted
7	There is no significant relationship between verifying social media information and investment decision-making.	0.004	16	H ₀ Accepted
8	There is no significant relationship between daily time spent on social media and investment decision-making.	0.062	16	H ₀ Accepted
9	There is a significant relationship between trust in social media financial content and investment decision-making.	0	12	H ₉ Accepted
10	There is a significant relationship between the perceived ease of understanding social media financial content and investment decision-making.	0.056	16	H ₁₀ Accepted
11	There is a significant relationship between following financial influencers and investment decision-making.	0	16	H ₁₁ Accepted
12	There is a significant relationship between the influence of social media and investment decisions	0	16	H ₁ Accepted

Source – Primary Data

	Hypotheses	p Value	df	Result
1	There is no significant relationship between the objective of investment and stock market investment	0.095	7	H ₀ Accepted
2	There is no significant relation between the objective of investment and Fixed Deposits	0.743	7	H ₀ Accepted
3	There is a significant relation between the objective of investment and SIP investments	0.034	7	Ha Accepted
4	There is no significant relation between the objective of investment and Post Office Savings	0.427	7	H ₀ Accepted
5	There is no significant relation between the objective of investment and Mutual Fund Investment	0.06	7	H ₀ Accepted
6	There is no significant relation between the objective of investment and Investment in Derivatives	0.092	7	H ₀ Accepted
7	Exposure to misleading or false content on social media has no significant effect on investment decision-making	0.717	8	H ₀ Accepted
8	There is a significant relation between the use of YouTube and Social Media Trust	0.05	3	Ha Accepted
9	There is no significant relation between the use of Instagram and Social Media Trust	0.131	3	H ₀ Accepted
10	There is no significant relation between the use of Twitter/X and Social Media Trust	0.348	3	H ₀ Accepted
11	There is a significant relation between the use of WhatsApp and Social Media Trust	0.042	3	Ha Accepted
12	There is no significant relation between the use of Telegram and Social Media Trust	0.169	3	H ₀ Accepted
13	There is no significant relation between the use of Facebook and Social Media Trust	0.192	3	H ₀ Accepted

Table 8: Usage of Different Social Media Platforms

	N	Percent
YouTube	137	37.8%
X	24	6.6%
Insta	107	29.6%
Telegram	16	4.4%
Whatsapp	61	16.9%
Facebook	17	4.7%
	362	100.0%



Out of 209 respondents, YouTube emerged as the most frequently selected platform, chosen by 137 respondents (65.6%), followed by Instagram with 107 selections (51.2%). WhatsApp was also significant, with 61 respondents (29.2%) selecting it as a source of financial content. Telegram and Facebook were selected by 16 (7.7%) and 17 (8.1%) respondents, respectively. These results clearly indicate that investors are engaging with multiple platforms simultaneously, with a strong preference towards video-based and visual content platforms like YouTube and Instagram. This suggests that investor sentiment is not confined to a single source but is influenced by a diverse range of social media channels.

VII. KEY FINDINGS

Demographic Profile

The survey captured a predominantly young and well-educated cohort: around 70 per cent of the 209 respondents are between 18 and 35 years of age and more than 50 per cent hold at least a post-graduate degree. It can therefore be assumed that the sample supports the hypothesis of a digitally educated workforce more connected in the age of the internet. Furthermore, the education statistics show sociable and financial acumen and active social media habits.

Approximately 37 per cent of the respondents claim to earn less than Rs.5 lakh annually. The rest are distributed amongst the other income brackets with a total of 7.1 per cent earning above Rs. 20 lakh. The middle class focus is significant as these individuals are often short of finances to spare, making them both desperate to safely invest and prone to social media risk and fad investments.

Platform Usage

YouTube is the most sought-after social media app for financial information, holding 65.6 per cent of the use, with Instagram following closely behind at 51.2 per cent. WhatsApp groups are used by 29.2 per cent. Telegram (7.7 per cent) and Facebook (8.1 per cent) remain small in this area. The visuo-verbal character of YouTube and conversational nature of WhatsApp show the need for non-reading content as opposed to reading texts.

Trust & Verification

While 88 per cent of users admit to only sometimes verifying information received from influencers, only 12 per cent consider influencer advice “highly reliable.” This gap reveals that most users only perform ad-hoc fact-checking, which may cause them to overlook important details in quick-moving conversations. Additionally, data indicates a significant positive correlation between YouTube usage and trust in social media content, as well as WhatsApp. Instagram, Twitter/X, Telegram and Facebook do not exhibit this correlation. This difference suggests that format and community structure, such as long-form video versus ephemeral text and images, impact investor trust.

Demographic Moderators

Education Level ($p = 0.009$) and Income Level ($p = 0.026$) both have significant effects on decision-making patterns, indicating that higher education and earnings correlate with more analytical, less impulsive trades. By contrast, age ($p = 0.952$) and gender ($p = 0.357$) show no significant influence, suggesting that social-media biases cut across these dimensions in this sample. Furthermore, investors who follow influencers ($p < 0.001$) or participate in finance groups ($p < 0.001$) are markedly more likely to act directly on social-media tips, underscoring the power of perceived authority and peer endorsement in driving behaviour.

Investment Objectives & Products

When mapping stated objectives (e.g., wealth accumulation, retirement planning) to product choices, only SIP investments exhibit a statistically significant alignment ($p = 0.034$). No such alignment emerges for direct stocks, mutual funds, fixed deposits, post-office schemes, or derivatives. This finding points to SIP's resonance with goal-oriented strategies among young investors.

Interestingly, exposure to misleading or false content shows no significant effect on investment decisions ($p = 0.717$), which may imply that blatant misinformation is either being filtered out by investors' selective attention or that subtler influences evade straightforward survey detection.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the comprehensive analysis of survey data and its synthesis with academic literature, the following recommendations are put forth for various stakeholders to optimise the benefits and mitigate the risks associated with social media in the financial domain.

1. For Individual Investors

Individual investors, particularly younger and less experienced ones, must adopt proactive strategies to navigate the complex financial landscape of social media. First and foremost, cultivating critical evaluation skills is essential; investors should verify information from social media against multiple credible sources, maintaining a sceptical mindset by questioning the expertise of the source, identifying potential conflicts of interest, and validating claims with established financial principles. Equally important is prioritising digital financial literacy, which involves not only understanding financial concepts but also recognising persuasive techniques, algorithmic influence, and red flags in online content. Awareness of behavioural biases such as herd mentality, overconfidence, and confirmation bias is crucial, as these are often amplified on social media and can lead to impulsive or irrational investment decisions. Furthermore, relying solely on social media should be avoided; instead, investors should diversify their information sources by including traditional financial education platforms, credible news outlets, academic research, and professional financial advice. Lastly, while financial influencers ("finfluencers") can sometimes offer useful insights, their motives should be carefully scrutinised. Investors must assess whether these individuals are driven by personal gain, such as commissions or follower growth, and should evaluate their advice based on objective financial principles rather than popularity or charisma.

2. For Financial Institutions and Educators

Financial institutions and educators play a crucial role in building a more informed and responsible digital financial ecosystem, especially as social media becomes a dominant source of investment information. To meet the evolving needs of young and novice investors, they must develop tailored, engaging content that resonates with digital audiences using platforms like YouTube and Instagram to break down complex financial concepts into accessible, visually rich formats that offer practical guidance and explain key ideas like risk and return. Emphasising the importance of risk

management, diversification, and long-term planning is essential to counter the growing appeal of “get rich quick” narratives often found online. Institutions must also prioritise transparency and credibility by clearly disclosing affiliations, adhering to regulations, and consistently sharing evidence-based, unbiased information thereby building trust and setting themselves apart from less reliable voices. Importantly, financial education initiatives should go beyond traditional lessons and include media literacy training that empowers individuals to evaluate online content critically, spot misinformation, and understand how digital influencers use persuasive tactics. To strengthen these efforts, collaboration is key: educators and financial entities should partner with social media platforms to promote verified content and work with regulators to create and uphold standards for responsible financial messaging online. By combining education, transparency, and collaboration, these stakeholders can help shape a safer and more empowered digital investing environment.

3. For Policymakers and Regulators

Policymakers and regulators have a vital role in fostering a secure and inclusive digital financial environment, where innovation and accessibility are balanced with strong investor protection. As social media increasingly influences financial behavior, it's essential to establish clear, enforceable guidelines for those offering financial advice online particularly “finfluencers” to ensure transparency around their qualifications, affiliations, and the risks involved in their recommendations. Protecting investors also means implementing robust mechanisms to detect and respond quickly to financial misinformation and scams, including fast-track content removal processes and widespread public awareness campaigns. Supporting digital financial literacy is another cornerstone of this effort, with a focus on reaching vulnerable groups such as novice or low-income investors through programs that teach critical thinking, risk evaluation, and media literacy. In addition, encouraging academic research into how social media shapes financial decisions can help close existing knowledge gaps and support more effective, evidence-based policymaking. Finally, regulators must explore ways to hold social media platforms accountable ensuring they take responsibility for the financial content they host by improving content moderation, increasing user verification, and offering more transparency into how algorithms amplify financial messages. By embracing these strategies, stakeholders can create a digital financial ecosystem that empowers individuals with the right tools and protections, while limiting the risks posed by misleading or harmful content online.

IX. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study offers several directions for future research. Longitudinal studies can track behavioural changes over time, while qualitative methods like interviews can explore the emotional factors behind social media reliance. Comparative research across regions and controlled experiments on influencer impact would deepen understanding. There's also scope to develop better tools to measure digital financial literacy and social influence. Studying platform algorithms, evaluating literacy interventions, and examining the effects of gamified trading apps can further enrich insights. Cross-country comparisons and sentiment analysis using social media data can help identify global patterns and predict investor behaviour more accurately.

X. CONCLUSION

In today's digital age, social media has become more than just a space for social connection it's now a powerful influencer in how people, especially the younger generation, make financial decisions. This study set out to understand how platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp shape the investment behaviour of young investors in the Hubli-Dharwad region. What we found was both promising and concerning.

On one hand, it's encouraging to see that young investors are actively seeking financial information online. Platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp are their go-to sources not just for entertainment, but also for learning about stocks, SIPs, and other investment options. However, the flip side is that many of them place trust in content that is not always verified, often relying on influencers or viral trends without deeply questioning the accuracy or intentions behind the advice. Most admitted to verifying information only sometimes, which can be risky when it comes to money.

We also saw that behavioural biases like herd mentality, fear of missing out, and overconfidence play a major role. These tendencies are amplified by the fast, emotional, and peer-driven nature of social media. Interestingly, it wasn't age or gender that affected how people made decisions, but rather their level of education and income. And while many

investment choices didn't align with people's goals, SIPs stood out as the one option that did, offering a sense of structure and purpose in an otherwise chaotic online financial world.

The good news is that there's a clear path forward. If we can build stronger financial and digital literacy among young investors, encourage them to pause and verify before acting, and promote responsible, transparent content online, we can turn social media into a force for empowerment rather than confusion. This means collaboration between educators, platforms, financial institutions, and policymakers.

In the end, this research reminds us that behind every investment decision is a person, hoping to grow, to plan, and to secure their future. By understanding their behaviours and supporting them with the right tools and knowledge, we can help them make smarter, safer choices in an increasingly digital world.

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