

**Engineering Mobility:
An ethnographic study of how social media
platforms are mediating transnational
student mobility from India to Germany**



Dr Sazana Jayadeva

**Research Fellow,
UCL Institute of Education**

Indian students in Germany

Year	Number of Indian students
2008-09	3,516
2018-19	20,810

- Close to 500% increase
- Second most important source of foreign postgraduate students, after China
- Largest source of foreign students who study Engineering and Information Technology at the postgraduate level

Context

- **Scholarship on student migration:** the role of online media and social media in facilitating student mobility has received only passing mention.
- **Scholarship on social media and mobility:** focus mainly on role of social media in maintaining transnational networks, and promoting integration in destination country.
- **Limited research on how online and social media can craft mobility.** Existing studies argue:
 - Social media can help expand aspirant migrants' networks beyond "strong ties", re-establish contact with "weak ties" and activate "latent ties" (Granovetter 1973)
 - Impact of "latent ties" in the facilitation of migration → portrayed as limited.
 - Therefore, social media not seen as increasing social capital in significant way.

- **Section 1:** Fieldwork
- **Section 2:** 'Study in Germany' peer-support Facebook and WhatsApp groups
- **Section 3:** Conclusion



Fieldwork

- Fieldwork conducted between 2017 and 2018, 2020
- **Online ethnographic fieldwork** within 4 Facebook groups and 15 WhatsApp groups – research with aspirant student migrants
- **Interviews** with Indian students in Germany
 - 40 Indian students
 - 17 German universities
 - Vast majority (n=36) were studying for a Master's in Engineering (Mechanical, Civil, Chemical, Electrical, and Computer Science)
 - Vast majority (n=34) were male


Facebook and WhatsApp groups and Learning to Move

- Process of organising to go abroad for study → complicated and stressful
- Existing social networks → not adequate
- Education consultants → unreliable and uninformed
- Migration infrastructure on social media

Facebook

 MS in Germany™ 2018 

MS in Germany™ 2018

 Closed Group

- About**
- Discussion
- Members
- Events
- Videos
- Photos
- Files
- Recommendations

About This Group

Description

The official Facebook group for the website <http://msingermany.co.in/>

HINT: You can use the "Search this group" option on the left menu of this group to search for members, topics, previously asked questions etc.

Welcome, Thank you for being here 😊

Group Type

Study Group

Members · 21,601



April 9 at 9:55pm · 

Hello people, Someone list me Paid Universities in Germany for Industrial/Mechanical. Thanks in Advance 😊



8


29 Comments



 Dhruv Soni try to find a [job](#) in Germany as of now, also learn the language if possible. With these many years of experience in this field. There is a course in Dresden International University on Automotive Safety, look... See more



 ▶ **Bharat in Germany!**

April 9 at 6:28pm · 


Can we consider internship period as [work](#) experience ?



7

4 Comments



 Hi friends I worked for 2.5 years as an engineer after completion of my btech and at present i resigned my [job](#) because of my family problems and i applied for ms in Germany for suppose if i got admit then during the... See more



 ▶ **Bharat in Germany!**

January 24 at 7:50pm · 

...I am currently having more than 3yrs of [work](#) experience in development profile (Java and Java script). Can anyone let me know how's the university, and what are the [job](#) prospects for DA profile in Germ...



8

75 Comments



 Data sciences is a good field and I don't think one might have problem in getting a [job](#) in Germany Bro Jacob university is a private institute and there are a lot more universities in Germany which are totally free so... See more



Anand Singh ▶ **MS in Germany™ 2018**

May 4 at 4:43pm ·

Here is the [whatsapp](#) group for MBA&E HTW Berlin.

WhatsApp Group Invite

chat.[whatsapp.com](#)



2



Sandeep Mehta ▶ **MS in Germany™ 2018**

May 1 at 9:21am ·

[WhatsApp](#) group for TU Freiberg CMS winter 2018 selected candidates. Please join only if you are admitted for the course and share with people you know

WhatsApp Group Invite

chat.[whatsapp.com](#)



1



Anupam Singh ▶ **MS in Germany™ 2018**

11 hours ago ·

Any [whatsapp](#) group for University of Paderborn winter 2018 in CS?

2

4 Comments

Facebook

April 9 at 9:55pm · 🌐

Hello people, Someone list me Paid Universities in Germany for Industrial/Mechanical. Thanks in Advance 😊

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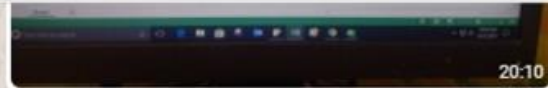
...I am currently having more than 3yrs of [work](#) experience in development profile (Java and Java script). Can anyone let me know how's the university, and what are the [job](#) prospects for DA profile in Germ...


8 75 Comments

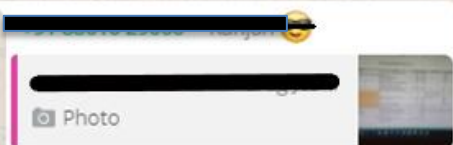

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WhatsApp



 BiG: Masters CSE


 20:10

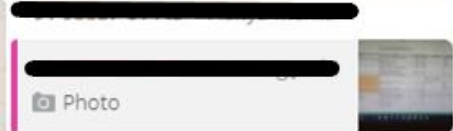

I had made  this list of universities and english taught CS courses..might help you guys 20:11

  Photo 20:12


Thanks brother  20:12

 Blurred image but visible enough  20:12

 what* 20:15

  Photo 20:16

Quite helpful 20:16

 Thanks mate 20:16



Communities of Practice

(Wenger 2015)



shared domain of interest



members who interact, share information, help each other, and learn together



a shared repertoire of resources such as experiences, stories, and tools and techniques of solving common problems

Information

- Available on internet but more easily accessible through groups
- Not easily available previously
- Not available previously:
 - Trends
 - Personal experience

Community

- Close-knit community of collaborators
- Group members used words like “community”, “family”, “bro”, “sis”, “bhai”, “anna”, “akka” to refer to themselves/each other.
- Ethic of encouragement and support

Community

- Desire to “give back to the group” or “return the favour”



Community

- Study abroad expertise = tremendous exchange value in the group
- Study abroad gurus

“In Football we have Lionel Messi as goat [Greatest Of All Time], in cricket we had Sachin Tendulkar as goat, in Germany education we have Karan sir as goat”

Vishnu: @Avinash I donno [if] god is there or not ... but he [Avinash] is there to help us.

Avinash: Anytime Bro. to help you guys.

Community

- Friendships beyond the groups

“He is very close to me. He regularly talks with me on the phone [...] He’s also applying for the same courses as me. We already told that if we get an admit in the same university, we should definitely go to that university. He suggested me many things. Actually, we are working together. [...] The first person who comes into my mind when I have a doubt is him.” – Gopal

- Meetups
- Travel and accommodation

'I felt the TU Munich group was like a collective mind. I have a problem, someone solves it for me. Someone else has a problem, I solve it.'

-- Arif

'It was a lonely and scary road before I found the groups. And then suddenly there were 100 people always there to help me'

-- Mansi

This case study

- Facebook and WhatsApp groups enable the activation of latent ties in a manner that has a major impact on student mobility
- Communities of practice → in order to go abroad to study, you have to first study how to go abroad

Conclusion

- Whole new migration infrastructures are being created in these social media spaces.
- Mutual support Facebook and WhatsApp groups have dramatically increased aspirant student migrants' social capital; can be seen as democratising access to study abroad, to some extent.
- Strong anti-consultant narrative
- Not just Indians, not just Germany
- Understanding student mobility from countries in the “Global South” demands attention to social media spaces
- Covid-19

Thank you!

Jayadeva, S. (2020). Keep calm and apply to Germany: how online communities mediate transnational student mobility from India to Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1-18.

Twitter: @SazanaJayadeva

Email: s.jayadeva@ucl.ac.uk