

Instagram, Engagement and Politics: A Descriptive Study

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, social media has been claimed to have an impact on public discourse and interaction in society. The Internet has become an increasingly important tool for citizens to not only gain political knowledge, but to engage in the political process itself. In particular, social media are increasingly used in political context. Social media platforms are a better tool for political campaigning than traditional methods. "Instagram" is one of the most powerful social media platforms to reach out to people and engage with them personally. One of the most significant implications of Instagram on elections, particularly in India, is its ability to reach a younger generation. Youngster uses "Instagram" for engaging in politics because they can "like" a leader's post and "tag" leaders to interact with them. This study explains the influence of political leaders/ parties on Instagram among youth. From the perspective of these users, Instagram provides convenient and accessible to stay informed, interact, and participate in political discussions. Based on their engagement, it is evident that Instagram significantly influences youth opinions and awareness regarding political leaders/ parties.

The findings of an online survey through structured questionnaires among 254 individuals residing in Coimbatore, indicate that the young generation in Coimbatore is much more interested in Politics and the Instagram platform is more effective to promote the political parties.

Keywords: Political leaders/ parties, Youth, Social Media, Instagram Platform.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, political leaders and candidates utilize social networking sites to disseminate their political propaganda to the target audience. Social media platforms are a better tool for political campaigning than traditional methods. "Instagram" is one of the most powerful social media platforms to reach out to people and engage with them personally. In today's political environment, it has a significant impact on how politicians run their campaigns and distribute information. It is no longer only for posting personal images, it has evolved into a vital platform for political discourse, electoral campaigns, and the dissemination of political ideas. This social media platform has become increasingly used as a political promotional tool since it provides information about current events and political developments. "Instagram" is a great tool for engaging in online politics in a variety of ways, including reading news, sharing news, making comments on subjects, joining campaigns, and signing online petitions etc. It gets politicians and parties closer to their potential supporters. It enables politicians to engage more effectively with citizens while

also building support and community for them to govern their political parties.

Beyond simply disseminating policies, political campaigns on Instagram aim to project a particular image of themselves to legislators. Politicians can use demographic factors and political attitudes to influence active political Instagram users. Creative images, videos have the potential to influence the users because they have the capacity of grabbing viewer's attention, conveying and changing voter's behaviour so politicians or leaders demonstrate who they are as individuals and what they stand for through images and videos etc. Users find a variety of political information, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and narratives that are tailored to resonate with a range of audiences as they browse through their feeds.

Meanwhile, Instagram has developed into a platform for the dissemination of political misinformation, which means that facts aren't always communicated accurately; occasionally, they're misrepresented to lead to conclusions that may not be totally true. In order to spread their messages, individuals turn to visually appealing memes and influencers. Propaganda may spread swiftly on Instagram due to its viral nature.

One of the most significant implications of Instagram on elections, particularly in India, is its ability to reach a younger generation. Youngster uses "Instagram" for engaging in politics because they can "like" a leader's post and "tag" leaders to interact with them. 50% of the population of India is below the age of 25, which has a significant impact on elections.

According to Statista survey (website) of 2025, around 362 million people were found to be Instagram users in India. On this particular social media, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the most followed political figure who has 80 million followers. At present the survey tells that Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the opposition Congress party, currently has 5 million followers, whereas M.K. Stalin, the Current Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, has 2 million followers.

In this article, the main goal is to analyse the use of Instagram for political propaganda and its Impact on youth by demographic variables. The study is based on 254 people who are between 15 to 29 years old.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Vonderschmitt, 2012) Focused on politicians' political campaigns that have been carefully organized to reach their audience and present the politician and government in the best possible position. Following the establishment of the United States, voting was restricted to land-owning white men who grew involved in elections by reading local or regional newspapers and visiting legislators or candidates in person. President Franklin D. Roosevelt first addressed the American people through radio in the 1930s. Later, in the 1960s, "Nixon and Kennedy's" argument sparked a new dissension in celebrity politics by showcasing the mass-produced version of in-person politics on televisions across the country. Because of technological advancements, citizens now have more possibilities to interact, since they have quicker access and they know more about each candidate.

(Nikhil Lakkisetty, 2018) Focused on the use of social media, which has an immense influence on communication and public discourse in society. The Internet has become an increasingly significant device for people to learn about elections and to participate in the political process. The impact of social media on politics is the main topic of discussion. And also highlighted the importance of social media from the points of view of politicians and voters. Politics on social media has positive and negative aspects.

(Stefan Stieglitz, 2012) Focused on social media, which has made an influence on public opinion, discourse and interaction recently. In particular, social media is becoming more prevalent in political contexts. Microblogging platforms (like Twitter) and social media platforms (such as Facebook) have

been considered to have the potential to increase political participation. The paper explains a framework for social media analytics in a political environment. On particular, the framework summarizes many politically important studies from the standpoint of political institutions, as well as scientific approaches that could be used to examine political communication on social media.

(Singh, 2018) Focused on how social media has become a tool for political participation among Haryana's youth through survey research. The planned study was conducted at Rohtak, Haryana. Rohtak is the capital region and virtually in the center of the state, with its headquarters in this city. According to the findings of the study, social media is a popular communication channel among Indian youth, and it has been clearly demonstrated that social media may be a useful instrument in cleaning up Indian politics and motivating the younger generation.

(Aijaz Ahmad Mir, 2021) Focused on the usage and effects of social media in both 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, as well as the widespread use of social media in the recent parliamentary elections in various states of India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, West Bengal and Kerala. The pandemic drove politicians and political parties to use social media to conduct virtual campaigns. Indian politicians have made significant use of social media in election campaigns in recent years

(Apuke, 2018) Focused on the importance of social media in political campaign communications. Computational propaganda now poses a global danger to online political campaigns and democracy, as it is capable of faking grassroots political support and likes on Twitter and Facebook. So, it increases opportunities to manipulate public opinion and spread political misinformation.

(Kwon, 2020) Focused why and how college students utilize Instagram for political purposes. Explores students' motives and political uses of Instagram, such as gathering political information, expressing political ideas, and following political accounts, using the Uses and Gratifications theory. Concentrated on how young people unintentionally obtain political information through Instagram. Political information intake, political opinion expression, and following politicians' Instagram profiles are all positively connected with motivation for self-expression. Aside from the motives, frequent Instagram use is connected with inadvertent news exposure on Instagram.

(Baker, 2009) Every technological development affects everyday life. This is especially true for the development of media technology. Although the media is a pervasive part of everyday life, the time when it becomes really important is in relation to governance and political information. Focused on whether online social networking sites such as Facebook or Myspace promote greater citizen participation in the political process.

(John H. Parmelee, 2019) Focused on uses and gratification research to the political use of Instagram. The results show that informational/educational motives are the most important and social benefit is the most important motive for following political leaders on Instagram. Men use Instagram more for social reasons than women, and the entertainment motive is common among youths. The findings also reveal how politically active individuals have more influence on Instagram.

(Mohammad Tawfik Yaakub, 2023) This study explores issues that may impact young people's political participation. The goal of this research is to investigate the impact of key elements (such as the influence of the social environment and mass media) on young political engagement. This study's findings can help political parties understand the significance of youth engagement. This study highlights practical consequences for young political participation.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To examine the effectiveness of Instagram as a platform for promoting political parties.
- To identify the significant factors that influence youngsters to follow political leaders or political parties on Instagram.

Research Question

RQ1: Does Instagram is an effective platform for promoting the political party?

RQ2: Why do youngsters follow political leader/ party on Instagram?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. This approach was considered appropriate as it enables the systematic description of respondent's characteristics, social media usage patterns and how and why youth engage with political parties/ political leaders on Instagram.

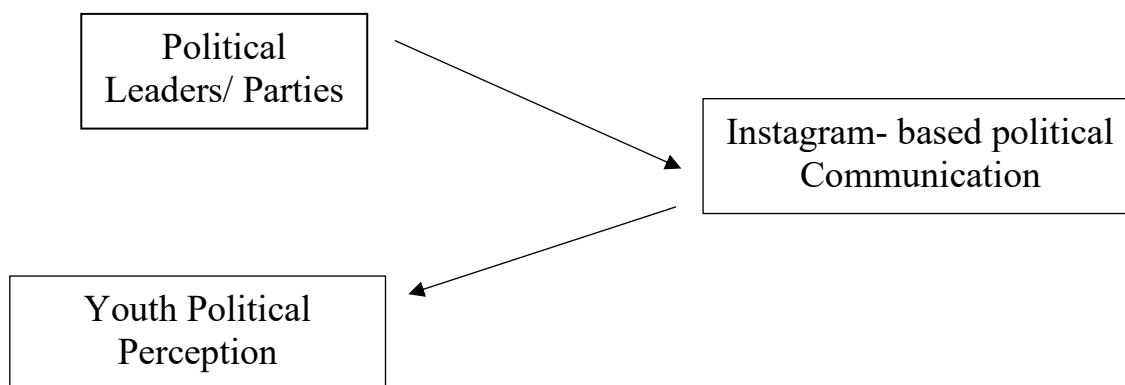
The study employed a survey method, and the data were collected demographic details, frequency of Instagram usage, and the key reasons for following political leaders or parties on Instagram. The reasons included keeping up the issues of the day, finding out more information about the political leader or party, helping the respondents decide on about Important issue, assisting them in deciding whom to vote for , helping respondents to decide about party/leaders works for their society, providing topics for discussion with others, offering content to post or share, using political content as a basis for arguments with others, criticizing the political leader/parties, accessing information quickly, easy of obtaining information, the low cost of accessing information and communicating support for the political leaders/parties.

A Quantitative analysis is applied on the collected data using Frequency Tests by using SPSS software (Statistical Package for the Social Science).

Sample:

Based on the (National Youth Policy 2025), which defines youth as individuals aged 15- 29 years. The sample for the study consisted of 254 respondents from Coimbatore, selected using convenience sampling technique, representing the youth population

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



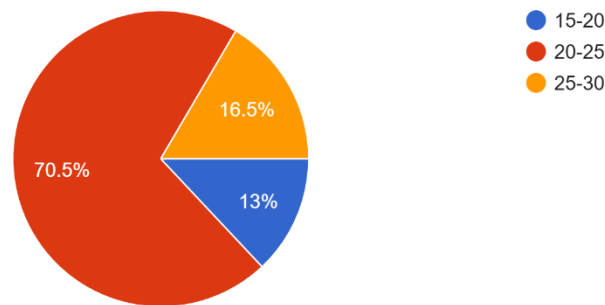
The conceptual framework of the present study proposes a mediated relationship between political leaders/parties and youth political perception. Political leaders and parties are treated as the independent variable, while youth political perception is considered as the dependent variable. The framework posits that political leaders and parties do not influence youth perception directly; rather, their influence operates through Instagram-based political perception. Political leaders and parties use Instagram to disseminate

political messages, updates, and campaign content through posts, reels, stories, and interactive features. These Instagram-based communications shape how youth perceive political information in terms of accessibility, credibility, and relevance. This mediated process, in turn, influences youths' political perception. Thus, Instagram functions as a mediating platform that translates political messaging into youth political perception.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

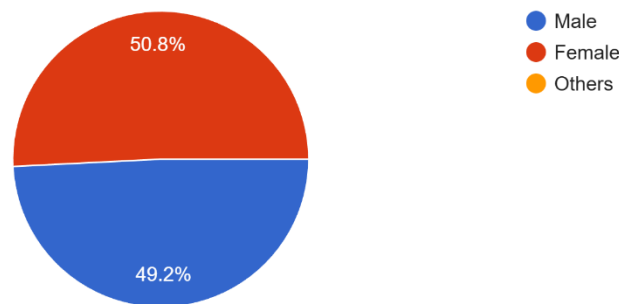
Age

254 responses



Gender

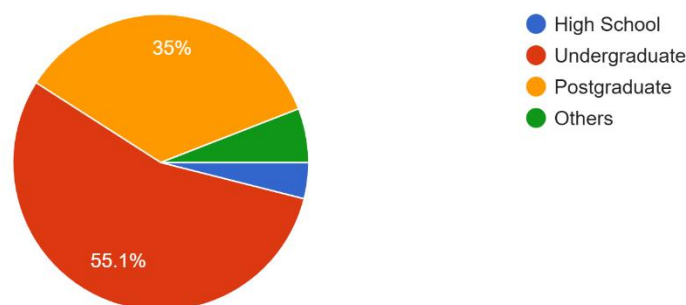
254 responses



Majority of the respondents 70.5% were belonged to the 20 to 25 years, followed by 16.5% in the 25 to 30 years category and 16.5% were between 15- 20 years.

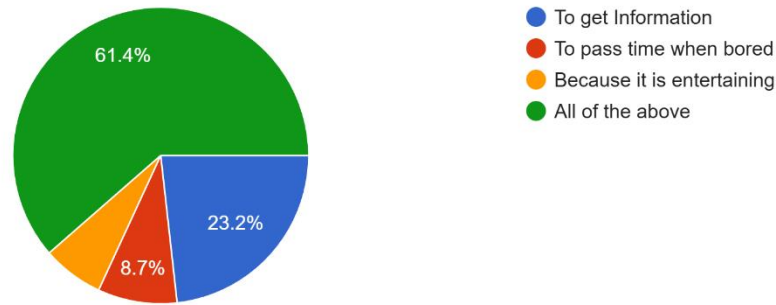
Education Qualification

254 responses



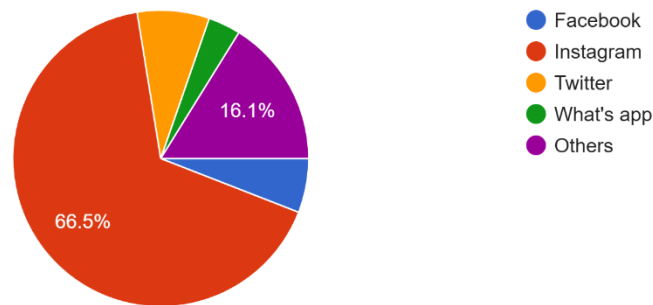
According to the conducted online survey of 254 respondents in Coimbatore, 49.2% were male and 50.8% were female, with 55.1% pursuing undergraduate studies, followed by postgraduates 35%, high school students 3.9%, and the others 5.9%.

I use social media
254 responses



Regarding the purpose of social media use, most respondents indicated that they use it for information, entertainment, and passing time (61.4%), and 23.2% using it mainly for information, 8.7% to pass time and 6.7% for entertainment.

On which social media platform do you follow politics?
254 responses



Among the respondents, Instagram emerged as the primary platform for the following politics (66.5%), followed by Twitter (7.9%), Facebook (5.9%) and other platforms (16.1%). Most respondents had come across political publicity on Instagram (76.8%), while 23.2% had not. A majority of respondents expressed interest in politics (63.8%), highlighting the platform's ability to reach the younger generation and influence political engagement among youth.

RQ1: Do you think that Instagram is an effective platform for promoting their political party

| Do you think that Instagram is an effective platform for promoting their political party? | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
| Valid | No | 53 | 20.9 | 20.9 | 20.9 |
| | Yes | 201 | 79.1 | 79.1 | 100.0 |

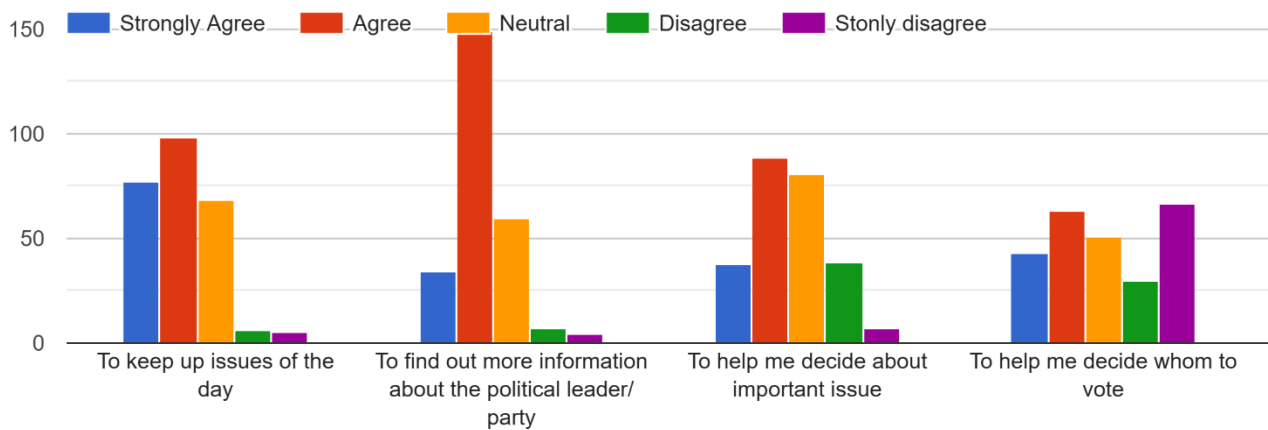
| | | | |
|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Total | 254 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
|-------|-----|-------|-------|

The findings indicate that a substantial majority of respondents perceive Instagram as an effective platform for promoting political parties. Out of 254 respondents, 201 (79.1%) reported that Instagram is an effective platform for political party promotion, while 53 respondents (20.9%) expressed a contrary view.

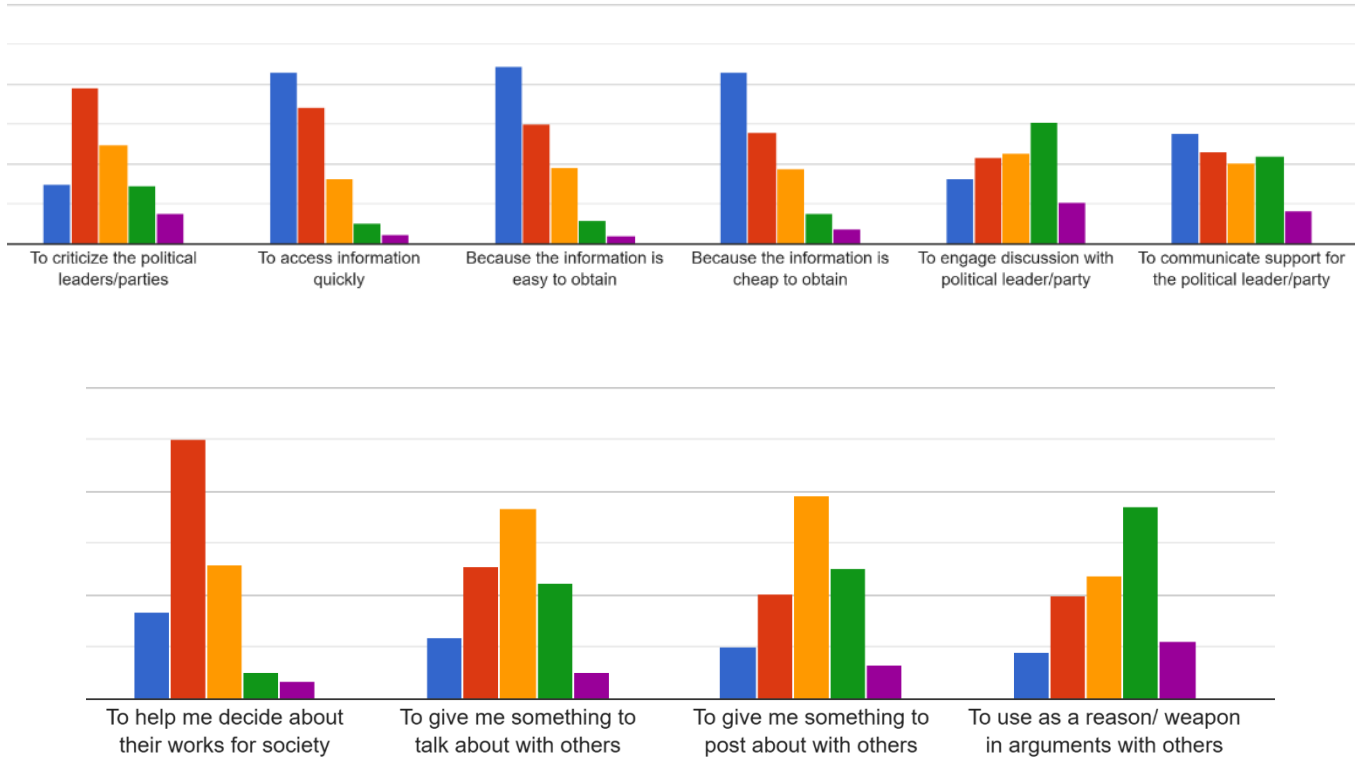
RQ 2: Why do youngsters follow political leader/ party on Instagram?

People follow political leader/party on Instagram for the following reasons. The Construct is taken from the article “Insta-Politicos: Motivations for Following Leaders on Instagram. (John H. Parmelee, 2019)

I follow Political Leader/ Party on Instagram...



| I follow political leaders/ parties on Instagram |
|---|
| a. To Keep up the issues of the day |
| b. To Find out more information about the political leader or party |
| c. To help me decide about Important issue |
| d. To help me decide whom to vote |
| e. To help me decide about their works for their society |
| f. To give me something to talk about with others |
| g. To give me something to post with others |
| h. To use as a reason/weapon in arguments with others |
| i. To criticize the political leader/parties |
| j. To access information quickly |
| k. Because the information is easy to obtain |
| l. Because the information is cheap to obtain |
| n. To communicate support for the political leader/party |



Most respondents followed political leaders/ parties on Instagram for multiple reasons. Many agreed that they do so to find information about leader or parties (149 respondents), keeping up with issues of the day (98 respondents), following political pages helps them decide on important issues (89 respondents) and to evaluate leaders societal works (125 respondents). Most respondents also agreed that they follow political pages to criticize leaders or parties (98 respondents).

In addition, most respondents strongly agreed that they follow political pages to access information quickly (108 respondents), easy to obtain information (111 respondents), and to communicate support for leaders or parties (108 respondents).

A majority of the respondents disagreed with using it as a reason or weapon in arguments with others and also expressed reluctance to engage in discussions with political leaders or political parties. Most respondents expressed strong disagreement with the notion that it helps them decide their voting choice. The findings reveal that a substantial majority of respondents (79.1%) perceive Instagram as an effective platform for promoting political parties. This suggests that Instagram has emerged as a significant digital medium for political communication, particularly among youth. The high percentage of positive responses indicates that social media platforms are increasingly recognized as important tools for political outreach, branding, and visibility. It also indicated that youth primarily follow political leaders and parties on Instagram for information-seeking and awareness-related purposes rather than for active political participation or electoral decision-making. Instagram is perceived as a convenient and efficient platform for accessing political information, keeping up with current issues, and evaluating leaders’ societal contributions. While respondents use the platform to express opinions through criticism or support, they

show reluctance to engage in political arguments or direct discussions with political leaders or parties. Moreover, Instagram is not considered influential in shaping voting decisions. Overall, the results suggest that Instagram facilitates political awareness and perception formation among youth, but its role in political persuasion and voting behaviour remains limited.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this survey indicate that Instagram serves as a significant platform for political engagement among the youth in Coimbatore. Most respondents actively use the platform to stay informed, follow political leaders/ party, keep up with current issues, and make decisions about important societal and political matters. The majority agreed that Instagram provides quick, easy, and affordable access to political content, allowing them to both support and criticize leaders or parties.

From the perspective of these users, Instagram provides convenient and accessible to stay informed, interact, and participate in political discussions. Based on their engagement, it is evident that Instagram significantly influences youth opinions and awareness regarding political leaders/ parties.

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