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Exploring Motivations of Instagram Use in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Instagram is widely popular among youngsters. News media turns to Instagram and disseminates the political information across globe. The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of Instagram amongst the students of International Islamic University Islamabad based on the political Information consumption and online political participation. Using Uses and Gratification theory, this study examines students' motivations behind the use of Instagram for the political purpose such as getting and sharing political information, expressing political opinion and following political accounts. For this purpose, data was collected through purposive sampling and analyzed to identify the motivation of the students of IIUI for the use of Instagram regarding online political participation.

Keywords: Political Communication, Online Political Participation, Media Consumption, Instagram

INTRODUCTION

From research to reading books, streaming videos, to E-commerce websites, and expressing views on various social media platforms have enabled people to express with freedom, on topics of societal concern People have been seen to organize protests and sign petitions via social media outlets (Vitak et al., 2011). Nowadays, the new generation finds itself inclined to use the internet for communicating political point of views. Researchers have been investigating the relationship between social media consumption and youth political engagement (Journell et al., 2017).

Vitak et al (2013), suggests that college students tend to join political groups on Facebook. This allows them to obtain information on prospective candidates, and gives them the opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions and engage in political activities.

The past few years have seen Instagram top the charts for social media consumption among the youth (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Reports suggest that Instagram is mostly used by people of younger ages ranging from 18 to 24, while content on Facebook is consumed by users of all age groups between 18 and 65+ years (Pew Research Center, 2019).

This has motivated politicians to switch to Instagram in order to gain support from young adults benefiting them in their political campaigns. An example is that Alexander Van der Ballan was elected President in 2017 of Australia that happened due to successful utilization of Instagram as an election campaign (Liebhart & Bernhardt, 2017). Other studies found that during the 2016 U.S. general elections, Instagram was heavily used by major party candidates to present what they stand for, and gain young followers (Duffy, 2016; Parmelee & Roman, 2019).



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Despite the excessive use of Instagram, few studies have just examined the use of Instagram by young adults for political communication and political information (Munoz & Towner, 2017; Russmann & Svensson, 2017). Many studies have been conducted on the consumption of social media for political information, but a majority of them are only targeted towards Facebook and twitter (Vitak et al., 2011). Additionally, some people do not consider Instagram to act as a means to obtain political knowledge and news.

Youngsters can participate in a number of political activities online such as, expressing opinions about political issues, sharing political information and news, and signing petitions (Valenzuela, 2013).

Problem Statement

Previous literature explicitly shows the relationship between social media use, in particular, Twitter and Facebook, and the political engagement among the young audiences (Vitak et al., 2011). However, not only Facebook and twitter is in use for the political communication but Instagram over the past few years has evidently cemented its place among the young audiences, politicians and the news media as a widely popular medium for the communication of an array of political content, yet very few studies have been carried out about the use of Instagram among the young audiences regarding political content (Munoz & Towner, 2017; Russmann & Svensson, 2016). Therefore, the present study aims to explore the political use of the Instagram and online political participation among users.

Objective of the Study

To investigate the motivation behind the use of Instagram among female university students.

Research Questions

RQ1: Do students use Instagram for information seeking?

RQ2: What are the motivations behind using Instagram?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Uses and Gratification form the basis of present study. This theory helps us to understand the motivations behind people choosing a specific form of media by emphasizing on personal motivations (Basilisco & Cha, 2015). The U&G theory categorizes people as active users who consume media as a means of personal gratification (Katz et al., 1973).

Many previous studies on U&G categorized and identified the needs and motivations of audiences for television and other traditional media (Katz et al., 1973). Berelson (1959) looked into why people read newspapers and discovered that they do so to learn about current events, spend time without thinking, appear well-informed in social groups, and feel connected to society. Several researches looked into why people watch television. People watch television to unwind or pass the time while at home with their families by watching entertainment shows (Katz et al., 1973).

Different communication scholars have expanded on and applied the U&G theory to explore why and how people use new media (Basilisco & Cha, 2015). A distinct feature of new media is “user-generated content,” which describes media content that users themselves create and distribute (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Shao (2009) looked at previous research on the motivations and uses of the Internet, Facebook, MySpace, Wikipedia, and YouTube (Bowman & Willis, 2003) and discovered four common motivations for user-generated media use: information seeking, entertainment, social interaction, and self-expression. Another significant difference between old and new media is that individuals anonymously create and distribute their own



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material (Al-Kandari et al., 2016). When media academics look at what motivates people to utilize social media instead of traditional media, they find that self-expression is a major factor (Shao, 2009). Self-expression, according to Papacharissi (2002), is motivated by a desire to tell people a little bit about oneself; we see this on social media in the use of personal webpages to display individuals' identity and personality.

The notion of motivation for self-expression was enlarged by Kaye (2005) and Shao (2009) to "represent deliberate expressing of one's feelings and thoughts." They discovered that people find the Internet and weblogs to be easy forums for presenting and sharing their thoughts and views.

Uses of Instagram

Instagram debuted in 2010 and soon rose to become one of the most popular social networking sites (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). Instagram, like Facebook (its parent firm) and Twitter, provides a variety of useful functions (e.g., News feed, following, Instagram live, Instagram stories, Direct Message). (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Alhabash and Ma (2017) investigated which incentives are associated with increased Instagram use among college students. They gauged Instagram intensity by asking how much time college students spend on the platform each day and how attached they are to it. They discovered that the motivations of Instagram use are entertainment and convenience.

In the previous few years, the Instagram landscape has evolved significantly. Instagram's user base has grown fast since 2016, for example, from 400 million in 2016 to more than 1 billion in 2020, representing a four-year increase of 150 percent.

Motivations

Use of social media for political knowledge has a common and prominent motivation for information seeking (Kaye & Johnson, 2002, 2015; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Those with a strong motivation to acquire information are more likely to pay attention to it and be interested in a wide range of topics. To serve this purpose, the Internet and social media provide a simple and accessible source of knowledge on a wide range of issues (Raine, 2008). Politicians, and journalistic organizations increasingly use Instagram (Murphy, 2019).

Furthermore, users can easily find political news blended into other postings created and shared by their friends by scrolling down the page on News Feed (Barnstorm & Jervelycke Belfrage, 2018; Fletcher & Nielson, 2018).

Another key motivator for political use of social media is the desire for self-expression (Parmelee & Roman et al., 2019). The need to convey personal thoughts and critique (Kaye, 2005) is referred to as motivation for self-expression (Parmelee & Bichard, 2012). Wu and Atkin (2017) looked into people's reasons for commenting on news articles online. They discovered that commenting in online news comment sections is linked to increased self-expression.. On social media, expression of opinion is a public activity, which means that anybody can see what other people post, comment on, and share (Ekstrom & Shehata, 2018).

Following Accounts on Instagram

People who have significant inclinations to maintain a Para social relationship with a celebrity, stay up to date on athletes' schedules and news, and amuse themselves, for example, are likely to follow athletes on Twitter (Frederick et al., 2012).

Following political accounts are divided into two groups in this study: following news



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media accounts (e.g., Geo News, ARY News, Samaa, Dunya, etc.) and following politicians' accounts (e.g., Imran Khan, Marium Nawaz, Bilawal Bhutto, Shehbaz Sharif, etc.). Political posts on Instagram by news organizations are an example of what is referred to as "poster news." Instead of long articles and subtitles, news organizations use photos to create a poster using a photo and short, concise, fact-centered language (Towner & Muoz, 2017).

When confronted with intricate political information presented by politicians, those who desire to know what is going on around them (i.e., reason for information seeking) may feel uneasy. Simple, infographic-dominated news provided by the organizations on Instagram may be sufficient for them to stay informed on a variety of topics. Those who wish to communicate their views on public issues (i.e., motivation for self-expression) want to demonstrate their knowledge and stances on the subjects or influence others (Macafee, 2013).

Online Political Participation:

Voting, writing letters to the government, signing petitions, attending government meetings, participating in protests, making donations, are all examples of political participation (Sylvester & McGlynn, 2010).

Young folks have a wonderful opportunity to participate in online political activities because they are strongly involved in digital media (Bennett et al., 2009). There are two sorts of online political engagement: passive and active (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2014). Passive usage involves one-way communication, such as reading political news and information online, whereas active use involves two-way communication, such as participating in online political debates. Reading online political news, comments, and videos is an example of passive social media use. Active participation, on the other hand, includes things like publishing political text or photographs, joining political organizations, making comments, and participating in online discussions. Political participation on social media has been divided into three categories by several studies: political information intake, political opinion expression, and mobilization (Valenzuela, 2013).

Political opinion expression is the cognitive and expressive process by which people reflect on the news they consume and express their views on current events. By discussing, sharing, and posting their thoughts, people can engage in in-depth information processing (Bergstrom & Belfrage, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey has been conducted to collect the data from Instagram users to analyze the usage and motivation among the university students between age 18 to 24, because the users of Instagram is mostly of this age (Huang & Su, 2018). Sample was extracted via purposive sampling technique. Total 610 questionnaires were distributed amongst the female students of International Islamic University: Islamabad, out of which 467 received and 400 were found appropriate for the analysis of present study.

Self-administered questionnaire was distributed among the extracted sample and data was analyzed via SPSS.

DATA ANALYSIS

The provided information depicts the age distribution of a sample population comprising



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400 individuals. Following data shows the individuals categorized by age groups.

No. of Age group participants	
16-20	74
21-25	285
26-30	24
31-35	17
Total	400

The study reveals that 18.5% of the sample population provided valid responses and belong to the age group of 16-20, whereas the majority of 71.3% of the respondents are aged between 21-25. The age cohorts following the initial group, namely those aged 26-30 and 31-35, constitute 6.0% and 4.3% of the total sample.

The data presented herein pertains to the educational level of a sample size of 400 individuals. According to the frequency table, it can be observed that 28% of the individuals in the sample population possess a graduate degree as shown below.

Table 2: Education level of participants

Education	No. of participants	%
Graduate	112	28.0
Postgraduate	42	10.5
Undergraduate	246	61.5
Total	400	100.0

According to the survey results, 10.5% of the participants possess postgraduate degrees. The predominant cohort, accounting for 61.5% of the population is constituted of individuals who have completed their undergraduate studies. In a total of 28% for graduate degrees. The findings suggest that a predominant proportion of the sample populace has accomplished their undergraduate studies, trailed by a substantial segment with postgraduate qualifications. The sample comprises a relatively smaller proportion of individuals who hold postgraduate degrees. The data presented herein offers valuable insights into the educational attainment of the sample population. The findings suggest a diverse range of educational levels, with a notable proportion of individuals possessing undergraduate degrees. The statement underscores the heterogeneity of academic experiences among the individuals comprising the sample cohort.

Following data pertains to the daily duration of Instagram usage among a representative sample of 400 individuals. The table shows the quantity of participants and their respective proportions for every time classification.

Table 3: Time duration for Instagram

Time duration for Instagram	Frequency	Percent
1 to 2 hours	274	68.5
3 to 4 hours	96	24.0
5 to 6 hours	13	3.3
More than 6 hours	17	4.3
Total	400	100.0

The preponderance (68.5%) of acceptable answers indicated that they spend 1 to 2 hours



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per day on Instagram. Furthermore, a notable percentage of 24% of the participants revealed that they allocate a duration of 3 to 4 hours, whereas a comparatively smaller fraction of 3.3% disclosed spending 5 to 6 hours. Ultimately, a total of 4.3% of the participants reported dedicating over 6 hours per day to utilize Instagram.

RQ1: Do students use Instagram for information seeking?

Following data explained the notion to understand the usage of Instagram for information seeking.

The provided dataset depicts the degree of interest exhibited by a sample of 400 individuals towards local, national, and international politics. The presented tabular data displays the quantity of participants and their respective proportional values pertaining to every category of interest.

Table 4: Interest in Local politics, National politics, and international politics

Interest in Local politics, National politics, and international politics.	No. of students	%
Neutral	112	28.0
not at all	99	24.8
rarely interested	100	25.0
somewhat interested	50	12.5
very interested	39	9.8
Total	400	100.0

Above table shows that 28% of the valid responses indicated a neutral level of interest in politics. Furthermore, a proportion of 24.8% of the participants indicated a complete lack of interest, whereas 25% are rarely interested. Furthermore, 12.5% reported a moderate level of interest, while 9.8% conveyed a heightened level of interest, denoting a strong inclination towards political matters. The findings indicate varying degrees of involvement and enthusiasm towards political affairs among the participants.

The dataset depicts the count of politicians that have been followed by Instagram users in a sample size of 400 individuals. Following table displays the count of participants and their respective proportions for every classification of followers.

Table 5: Following of no. of Politician's accounts on Instagram

Following of no. of Politician's accounts on Instagram	No. of students	%
1 to 4	352	88.0
5 to 8	26	6.5
9 to 12	16	4.0
More than 12	6	1.5
Total	400	100.0

Data shows that 88% indicated that they followed the Instagram accounts of politicians ranging from 1 to 4. Furthermore, 6.5% of the participants reported adhering to a range of



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5 to 8, whereas 4% reported adhering to a range of 9 to 12. A reduced percentage of 1.5% indicated that they followed over 12 politicians or political organizations on the social media platform Instagram. The findings indicate a diverse range of levels of involvement with political material on Instagram within the surveyed demographic.

Data pertains to the count of news media profiles that are being tracked by Instagram users among 400 individuals. The tabulated data presents the count of participants and their respective proportional values across various categories of followership. Within the sample population, a significant majority of 83.8% provided valid responses indicating that they follow between one to four news media accounts on the Instagram platform.

Table 6: Following the Instagram accounts of media organizations

Following the Instagram accounts of media organizations		
organizations	No. of students	%
1 to 4	335	83.8
5 to 8	46	11.5
9 to 12	9	2.3
More than 12	10	2.5
Total	400	100.0

Furthermore, 11.5% of the participants reported following a range of 5 to 8 accounts, whereas 2.3% reported following a range of 9 to 12 accounts. A marginally greater percentage of 2.5% indicated that they followed in excess of 12 news media accounts on Instagram. The column denoting cumulative percentage exhibits the gradual increase in responses, with a value of 83.8% for the range of 1 to 4 followers, 95.3% for the combined range of 1 to 8 followers, 97.5% for the combined range of 1 to 12 followers, and ultimately 100% for all the categories taken together.

RQ2: What are the motivations behind using Instagram?

The provided dataset depicts the extent of concurrence with diverse assertions concerning the utilization of Instagram among a representative cohort comprising 400 individuals. The tabulated data displays the count of participants for every category of concurrence, ranging from Agree, Disagree, Neutral, Strongly Agree, to Strongly Disagree. In response to the prompt "For Entertainment," a total of 176 participants expressed agreement, 11 expressed disagreements, 126 remained neutral, 44 strongly agreed, and 43 strongly disagreed.

Table 7: Motivation behind using Instagram

Motivation	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly		total
				Agree	Disagree	
To access information quickly	106	11	94	30	33	274
To keep updated with issues of the day	57	0	22	10	7	96
To broaden my knowledge	7	0	6	0	0	13



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To share my views, thoughts, and experiences	6	0	4	4	3	17
	176	11	126	44	43	400

The survey results indicate that a majority of the participants, specifically 106 individuals, agreed with the statement "To access information quickly." Meanwhile, no participants disagreed with the statement, 94 individuals remained neutral, 30 strongly agreed, and 33 strongly disagreed. The survey results indicate that a majority of 57 respondents agreed with the statement "To keep updated with issues of the day," while no respondents disagreed, 22 were neutral, 10 strongly agreed, and 7 strongly disagreed. The survey results indicate that 7 respondents agreed, 0 disagreed, 6 were neutral, 0 strongly agreed, and 0 strongly disagreed with the statement "To broaden my knowledge." The survey results indicate that 6 participants agreed, 0 disagreed, 4 were neutral, 4 strongly agreed, and 3 strongly disagreed with the statement "To share my views, thoughts, and experiences." The aforementioned data offers valuable insights into the attitudes and perceptions of Instagram users with respect to its diverse applications. The aforementioned statement displays diverse degrees of concurrence, discordance, impartiality, robust concurrence, and robust discordance. The findings underscore the varied incentives and objectives that underlie the utilizations of Instagram among the study participants, encompassing a spectrum of activities such as amusement, expedient information retrieval, and social connectivity with acquaintances/subscribers.

Based on the collected data, it can be inferred that among the 400 participants who were surveyed, a majority of 59.8% (239 respondents) hold the belief that Instagram serves as a superior platform for political information, whereas 40.3% (161 respondents) hold a contrary view as mentioned below.

Table 8: Instagram is a source of Political information

Instagram is a source of Political information	No. of Students	%
No	161	40.3
Yes	239	59.8
Total	400	100.0

The data indicates that a significant proportion of the participants hold the perception that Instagram serves as a valuable medium for acquiring political information. The data suggests that a considerable proportion of the sample population believed that Instagram as a dependable and enlightening outlet for political content. This underscores the potential influence of the platform in shaping political discussions and granting a significant number of user's access to political information.

Data further explains that Instagram users engage in activities pertaining to the expression of political views and opinions. The presented table displays the count of participants for each respective activity and its corresponding frequency level

Table 9: Frequently following political activities on Instagram



	Frequently	Not at all	Often	Rarely	Sometime	Total
Following political activities on Instagram	14	168	20	89	109	400

Out of the total number of respondents, 168 individuals abstain from participating in political activities, while 20 individuals frequently engage in it, 89 individuals engage in it infrequently, and 109 individuals engage in it occasionally.

DISCUSSION

In contemporary era social media has gained significant prominence, and Instagram has emerged as a widely used platform for sharing personal experiences, fostering social connections, and keeping abreast of diverse subjects, including political matters. The assessment of Instagram's influence as a political information source necessitates a comprehension of how its users interact with political content. The data presents significant insights into various facets of Instagram usage concerning political information. The findings indicate that a majority of the participants (59.8%) perceive Instagram as a superior platform for accessing political information.

According to Parmelee & Roman (2019) Instagram's user base has grown fast since 2016, for example, from 400 million in 2016 to more than 1 billion in 2020, representing a four-year increase of 150 percent. In 2018, it overtook Facebook as the most popular social media network. While a notable proportion (40.3%) hold a contrary view. The aforementioned statement suggests a dichotomous viewpoint held by users with regards to the dependability and authenticity of political content disseminated on Instagram. Upon conducting a more in-depth examination, it has been determined that individuals exhibit a greater inclination towards news media sources as opposed to political organizations or politicians' accounts when seeking political news and information pertaining to the current political climate of Pakistan (76.5% vs. 23.5%). As Rauchfleisch & Metag, (2015), Politicians' Instagram posts typically contain long, one-sided, opinion-based content. Politicians can engage directly with prospective voters in the internet age, bypassing news organizations and journalists. The aforementioned inclination indicates that users exhibit a greater inclination towards established news sources with regards to political content on Instagram, potentially attributable to the perceived credibility and professionalism that is commonly associated with news organizations. The data reveals notable disparities in the degree of political engagement exhibited by Instagram users. A considerable proportion of individuals exhibit a neutral (28%) or showing lack of interest (24.8%) in politics at the local, national, and international levels. However, a smaller yet noteworthy subset demonstrates a heightened level of interest (9.8%). The aforementioned results demonstrate the heterogeneous spectrum of political involvement and underscore the necessity for customized strategies when disseminating political material on Instagram.

The analysis additionally illuminates the political activities that users participate in on Instagram. Frequently observed activities include the expression of political views and opinions, perusal of posts pertaining to political issues, and engagement with political content through the "like" button. Notwithstanding, the act of sharing photographs or videos that pertain to politics, incorporating political content into one's stories, and participating in conversations with political personalities are associated with relatively diminished levels of user interaction. According to Kaye & Johnson (2002), use of social media for political knowledge, as well as traditional media, has a common and prominent



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motivation for information seeking. The results suggest that individuals who use Instagram tend to exhibit a more passive approach to political participation on the platform, with a greater emphasis on content consumption rather than active engagement or contribution to political discussions. Although the data yields significant insights, it is imperative to take into account specific constraints that could affect the elucidation of the results. The potential lack of representativeness of the sample size, consisting of 400 respondents, may constrain the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Instagram users. A more comprehensive and heterogeneous sample would yield a more precise comprehension of the utilizations of Instagram as a source of political information. The credibility and impartiality of political content on Instagram remain uncertain, despite its potential as a source of information for users. The assessment of the reliability and accuracy of political content disseminated on Instagram is of paramount importance, given the pervasiveness of disinformation and the formation of insular communities on digital media platforms. While Kwon (2020) explained that those who wish to communicate their views on public issues (i.e., motivation for self-expression) want to demonstrate their knowledge and stances on the subjects or influence others.

The analysis undertaken underscores the intricate terrain of Instagram utilization for political information. The proposition posits that despite Instagram's function as a medium for political content assimilation, users maintain heterogeneous perspectives concerning its dependability. The aforementioned underscores the significance of advocating for media literacy and critical thinking proficiencies among Instagram users in order to effectively navigate the copious amounts of political information present on the platform. Furthermore, comprehending the predilections of Instagram users, including their proclivity towards news media profiles, can assist content producers and political agents in customizing their approaches to proficiently circulate political data. Through the adoption of user preferences and utilization of reliable news sources, political stakeholders can enhance participation and cultivate a populace that is better informed.

CONCLUSION

The results underscore the significance of Instagram as a means of accessing political information, a considerable proportion of users depend on the platform to remain up-to-date on political matters. It is imperative to exercise prudence in interpreting findings, given the constraints of the analysis and the potential partiality inherent in self-reported data. The findings of the present study indicate that a considerable proportion of the participants self-identified as frequent or regular users of Instagram, thereby underscoring the platform's widespread appeal among the surveyed cohort. The statement posits that Instagram has gained prominence as a consequential platform for the consumption of political information, providing users with a substitute for conventional news sources. The utilization frequency of Instagram exhibited variations among diverse demographic groups, indicating the necessity for additional investigation to examine the fundamental factors that contribute to these dissimilarities.

The findings of the analysis suggest that news media accounts are the primary source of political information on Instagram, as per user preferences. This highlights the significant impact of news media entities in molding the political consciousness and viewpoints of users on the platform. It is imperative to conduct a thorough assessment of the reliability and precision of the data disseminated by these accounts to guarantee that users are adequately informed and capable of making informed judgments. Furthermore, the analysis has brought to light the diverse degrees of interest and involvement exhibited towards political content on the Instagram platform. Although a subset of users expressed



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a neutral or low degree of interest, a considerable proportion of users indicated a moderate or high level of interest in political matters. The aforementioned indicates that Instagram has the potential to function as a medium for political dialogue and involvement, affording its users with avenues to articulate their opinions, engages in discourse, and make contributions to political exchanges.

Future Recommendations

In order to obtain a more comprehensive comprehension of the motivations and behaviors exhibited by individuals who utilize Instagram as a means of political engagement, it would be advantageous to undertake a qualitative investigation, employing methodologies such as interviews or focus groups. This approach would yield a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and the fundamental factors that influence their involvement with political content on the Instagram platform.

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the impact of algorithms on the consumption of political information can yield valuable insights into the potential biases and their consequential effects on the perspectives of users.

Examine the ramifications of influencer culture: Analyze the effects of political influencers on the Instagram platform, exploring their ability to shape users' political convictions and actions. Examine the substance, extent, and interaction of political influencers in order to comprehend their impact on shaping political dialogue and mobilizing their supporters.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of cross-platform political engagement, specifically focusing on the various ways in which users interact with political content on popular social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to the interconnections and disparities in political behavior among users across various platforms will provide the extensive understanding of political information and activism.

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