

## INSTAGRAM USAGE INTENTIONS BY YOUNG INDIANS: A USER GRATIFICATION THEORY APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

The research is an attempt to explore determinants of Instagram usage intentions amongst young Indians. A research framework was designed by using previously validated scales on User Gratification Theory and its applications pertaining to social media usage behaviour. This framework was then tested for statistical validation on a sample (n=271) Causal relationships were tested by applying multiple regression analysis. The research concluded that two factors (Entertainment and Self-expression and Impression Management) act as predictors of a young Indian user's intention to use Instagram. Interestingly the impact of Social Interaction, a core element of User Gratification Theory was found to have an insignificant impact on usage intention. Extraction and validation of a multi-faceted usage predictor (Entertainment and Self-expression) and conclusion that the social interaction does not predict usage intentions are the important contributions of this research work. **Keywords:** User gratification, Instagram usage behaviour, Self-expression, Impression Management, Social Interaction.

### Introduction

Instagram has become of the most popular social media platforms globally with monthly active user base of about 1 billion in CY2021. According to a media report by businessofApps, 70% of Instagram users belong to sub 35 age group, and the gender split (women: men ratio) stands at 51:49 in Q3-CY2021. As per a blog by BackLinko, India's active Instagram users stood at 100 million in 2021, making it one of the largest markets for Instagram globally. During the last decade, India became the powerhouse of social media consumption led by the considerable size of English speaking population, societal change, and affordable internet charges. Riding on this wave, Instagram became the latest social media sensation among Indian youths. Considering its potential reach to a young population, many brands and service providers have designed a dedicated promotional strategy for Instagram users. In the light of increasing subscriber base and the potential of this platform to engage a wide array of audience, an investigation into factors that results in better user engagement on Instagram has gained serious importance.

### User Gratification Theory- Framework and applications

As a part of the study an extensive review of the existing literature on social media usage behaviour, studies on User Gratification Theory in general, and its applications in the context of Instagram usage behaviour was conducted and presented. Although the research and commentary on the usage and gratification of social media can be historically dated back to the era of 1940, research work by Blumler, Katz (1974) is considered as a seminal theory in this domain. The research explains various motives of a user behind using social media and types of gratifications received by them. User Gratification explains the motive of individuals behind using various social media platforms and the selection of a particular medium amongst various options available based on individual gratification needs.

### Various Constructs of Gratification Theory

**Information Seeking:** With the convergence of news, product information and general information, social media platforms such as Instagram have become an important source of seeking information about the recent happenings in social world. "access to computer-mediated communication systems helps a user to expand informational and communicational capabilities and information seeking is found to be one of the biggest motives behind internet usage"- Papacharissi, Rubins (2000) This dimension was also being studied and validated as one of the important predictors of social media usage by Lee, Kim & Ham (2016).

**Social Interaction:** Social interaction was defined as "using social media to communicate and interact with others" Whiting, Williams (2013). This construct has been defined by previous studies such as Johnson, Yang

(2009) as “using social media to find new friends or friends with a common interest and to know share information about happenings in one’s life. Based on strong literature support for this construct (Tanta, Mihovilović & Sablić (2014, Hossain (2019) and the increasing popularity of Instagram as a social interaction platform, social interaction was considered in the research framework.

**Entertainment:** As per the literature review conducted, the element of entertainment was found to be a part of various studies such as Whiting & Williams (2013) and Gao, Feng (2016). Although the operational definition of the construct varies across the investigations. Whiting, Williams (2013) considered the escapism facet of entertainment (pleasure, fun, and enjoyment) while Gao, Feng (2016) studied the entertainment that occurred on account of engagement with news and the latest happenings or content which is as per the preference of the users.

**Self-Expression:** self-expression can be defined as “expressing one’s thoughts and feelings, and these expressions can be accomplished through words, choices or actions”- Kim, Ko (2007). Various facets of self-expression such as “to become popular, to show off and to self-promote are defined- Sheldon, Rauschnabel & Antony (2017). The operational definition of this construct includes the usage of Instagram to post one’s views, expressions, and likes freely on the social media platform.

**Impression Management:** Usage of Instagram in managing political images during election campaigns and gauging the impact of various politically motivated Instagram campaigns.-Lalancette, Raynauld (2019). It was observed that political images do exert their positioning (trustworthiness, honesty, friendliness, etc.) by managing their impression on platforms such as Instagram. Impression management to be one of the key motives behind popular bloggers motive behind creating content on YouTube-Sepp, Liljander & Gummerus (2011).

### **Literature Review**

A detailed analysis of research work on user gratification and its application to social media usage was conducted. Studies such as Pirkamali, D'Souza (2020), Hossain (2019), Huang, Su (2018), Tanta, Mihovilović & Sablić (2014) and Whiting, Williams (2013) were studied to explore the various dimensions of gratification attributes considered by these investigations.

### **Studies on UGT and Instagram Usage Intentions**

A model of Instagram usage determinants was developed Nedra, Hadhri & Mezrani (2019) by using TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) by Davis (1989) as the base construct and integrated Perceived Usefulness and Perceived Ease of Use as the antecedents of a social media user’s attitude towards using Instagram. This in turn was proposed to have an impact on the intention to use Instagram. The results validated the positive effect of perceived pleasure, social identity (cognitive, affective, and evaluative), and perceived ease of use on intention to use Instagram. Interestingly Perceived Usefulness, the strongest predictor of attitude and intentions as per TAM was found to have an insignificant impact on usage intentions.

Instagram usage intentions were studied by applying the perception-evaluation-intention chain and examined the role of consumers’ perceived enjoyment and usefulness on their intention to follow and recommend a brand community. It was found that both (enjoyment and usefulness) result in satisfaction and in tune, impact the intention to use and follow a particular Instagram account-Abdullah (2020).

A framework to understand users’ beliefs and usage intentions about Instagram was presented by Ting, Ming & Run (2015) presented by integrating user gratification elements with the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The research segregated user belief system into two categories and concluded that a user’s attitude towards Instagram is shaped by behavioural beliefs (personal gratification, features usefulness, socializing role, product information, and entertainment) while the normative beliefs included six factors such as siblings, relatives, close friends/peers, friends in general, Facebook friends and application reviewers.

A comprehensive analysis of various studies by Dutch, German, and British mass communications researchers was presented as Media Use as Social Action (MASA) Renckstorf, McQuail & Jankowski (1996). It is an integration of knowledge based on mass media and human interactions with various social media tools. This theory talks about four types of interpersonal communication purposes of a user while using media for social action. They are getting information, doing cooperation, having relations, expressing and explaining and strategic use.

### Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is “To explore determinants of young Indian subscriber’s intention to use Instagram”

### Scope of the study

For the said research, scope of the study was restricted to an age group of 18-35 (young adults). The rationale behind choosing the age group between 18 to 35 is the fact that a majority of Instagram users in India are from the same age group. Moreover, this customer class would be a prime decision-maker in their respective family.

### Research Methodology

Based on the literature review and study on various gratification elements studied and validated, a research framework was designed. The authors posit that three factors (Entertainment & Self-Expression (ESE), Social Interaction and Impression Management) act as the determinants of a Young Indian’s intention to use Instagram.

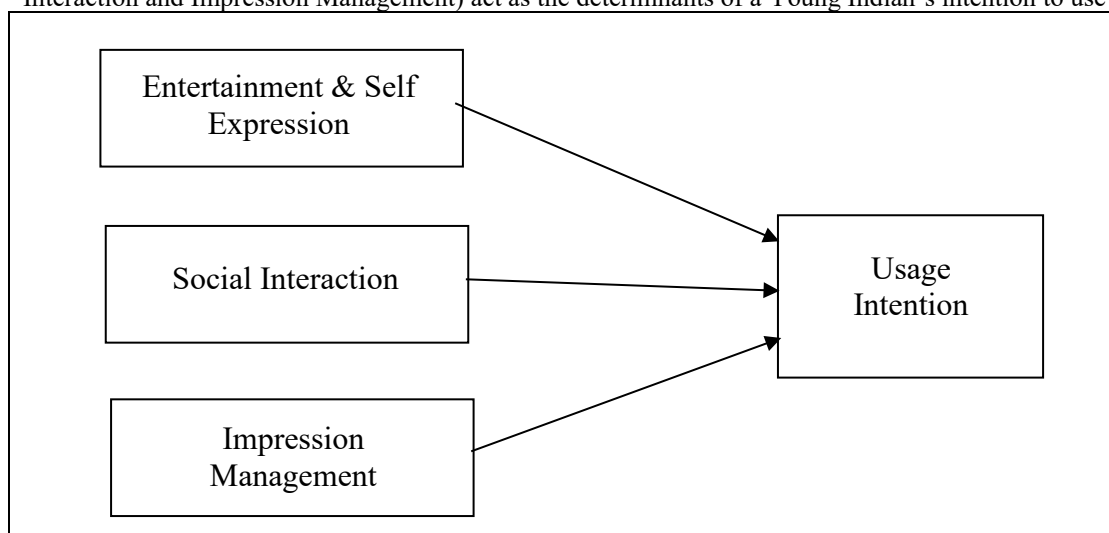


Figure 1: Research Framework

### Hypotheses

The research framework posits three factors (Entertainment & Self Expression, Social Interaction and Impression Management) as predictors of a user’s intention to use Instagram.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** ESE (Entertainment and Self-Expression) has an impact on a user’s intentions to browse Instagram (UI)

**H<sub>2</sub>:** SI (Social Interaction) has an impact on a user’s intentions to intentions to browse Instagram (UI).

**H<sub>3</sub>:** IM (Impression Management) has an impact on a user’s intentions to browse Instagram (UI)

### Research Design

This study is based on exploring determinants of an existing Instagram subscriber’s usage intentions. The respondents of this survey were chosen on two criteria; a person should be an active user of Instagram in India and should belong to 15-35 age bracket. As this survey was conducted during the COVID-19 period, non-probability convenience sampling was applied to simplify the data collection process. The tool used for data collection was questionnaire and a majority of the data was collected by using Google Forms (an online data collection method).

### Instrument Design

For designing the instrument, historical studies on the application of User Gratification Theory in social media usage were studied and the validated instruments were pooled for designing a draft questionnaire. The instrument for Sample I has 26 items, selected from Menon, Meghana (2021)- 9 items, Hossain (2019)-6 items, Johnson, Yang (2009)-3 items, Gao, Feng (2016)-5 items and Al-Kandari Melkote, & Sharif (2016) -3 items. Data was collected by using the online (Google Forms) method. The questionnaire link was posted on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The posts related to the online survey were created multiple times to gather interest amongst the sample respondents. No monetary or in-exchange compensation was offered to the participants for being a part of the survey.

### Data Analysis

**Demographic Details of the Sample-** For the study, data was collected from 277 respondents, out of which 6 entries were discarded due to incomplete or misleading information, and 271 usable datasets were analysed further data analysis. Out of total respondents, 56% are male and 94.8% belong to the 15-35 age group. 60.9%

of them are working professionals, followed by students (31%) and self-employed (7.4%). Out of the sample respondents, 33.9% usually spend less 1-2 hour per day on Instagram while 38.4% spend less than 1hour daily on browsing Instagram.

	Category	Respondents	%
Gender	Male	152	56.1%
	Female	119	43.9%
	Total	271	100.0%
Age Group	15-21	9	3.3%
	22-27	181	66.8%
	28-35	65	24.0%
	36-45	14	5.2%
	46 above	2	0.7%
	Total	271	100.0%
Profession	Student	84	31.0%
	Working Professionals	165	60.9%
	Self-Employed	20	7.4%
	Others	2	0.7%
	Total	271	100.0%
Daily time spent on social media	< 1 hour	32	11.8%
	1 to 2 hours	71	26.2%
	2 to 3 hours	89	32.8%
	> 3 hours	79	29.2%
	Total	271	100.0%
Daily time spent on Instagram	< 1 hour	104	38.4%
	1 to 2 hours	92	33.9%
	2 to 3 hours	46	17.0%
	> 3 hours	29	10.7%
	Total	271	100.0%
Monthly frequency post on Instagram	Rarely	145	53.5%
	1-2 posts	82	30.3%
	2-5 posts	31	11.4%
	More than 5 posts	13	4.8%
	Total	271	100.0%
Yearly frequency buying on Instagram	Never	124	45.8%
	Rarely	104	38.4%
	2-4 times a year	35	12.9%
	1-2 times a month	8	3.0%
	Total	271	100.0%

Table 1: Demographics of Sample (n=271)

**Correlation Analysis**

To explore the correlation amongst various categorical data points such as age, occupation, gender, and time spent on Instagram, post sharing & buying frequency, a Pearson’s Correlation analysis was performed.

Variable	Age	Total time on Social Media	Post Frequency	Buying Frequency
Gender				.188**
Total time spent on Social Media	-.228**		.203**	
Total time spent on Instagram	-.203**	.672**	.317**	.295**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation amongst Categorical Variables

On the basis of correlation analysis, it can be concluded that a user’s buying frequency on Instagram is positively correlated with the gender of the respondent. Total time spent on social media is significantly and positively correlated with total time spent on Instagram (r=0.672). As a user’s social media time spend increases, he/her tends to prefer Instagram more, over other social media platforms. Age was found to be negatively correlated with total time spent on Instagram (r=-0.203) and on social media (r=-0.228) indicating relatively lower participation of older age groups on social media, compared to their younger counterparts. A user’s post frequency (r=0.317) and product/services buying frequency (r=0.295) on Instagram increases as he/she spends more time on the Instagram platform. These findings underline the importance of better engagement, enhanced user content creation and adoption of various products and services.

**Correlation Analysis (Dependent and Independent Variables)**

To analyse the correlation between predictors and the outcome variable, a Spearman’s Rank correlation analysis was performed. Entertainment & Self Expression (r=0.545) and Impression Management (r=0.553) were observed to have a higher-order positive correlation with the Usage Intentions. However, the correlation between Social Interaction and Usage Intentions was found to be statistically insignificant (r=0.199).

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables		
	ESE	IM	SI
UI	0.545**	0.553**	0.199

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation amongst latent Variables

**Multicollinearity Diagnostics**

The dataset was analysed for multi-collinearity. Based on various indices such as VIF, Tolerance and CI values were compared with thresholds prescribed by Knock, Lynn (2012). CI value for all variables stood below 30, tolerance value less than 1, and VIF values less than 3, indicating satisfactory accomplishment of various thresholds prescribed indicating the non-existence of Multicollinearity issue.

**Multiple Regression Analysis**

A causal relationship between predictors and the outcome variable was analysed by conducting a multiple regression analysis. Three factors (Entertainment & Self Expression, Impression Management, and Social Interaction) were proposed as the determinants of young Indian Instagram subscriber’s intention to use Instagram.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.687a	.472	.467		.738	1.737

a. Predictors: (Constant), SI, IM, ESE

b. Dependent Variable: UI

Table 4: Model Summary

It was observed that, the R Value for the model stood at 0.687 while R Square and Adjusted R Square stood at 0.467 and 0.738 respectively. The Adjusted R Square value denoted the percentage of variation in the output variable, explained by the input variables, which in case of the model stands at 46.7%.

### Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	B	T	P Value	Conclusion
UI <---ESE	0.580	7.68	0.00	Accepted
UI <---SI	-0.072	-1.26	0.208	Rejected
UI <---IM	0.401	6.55	0.00	Accepted

Table 5: Hypotheses Testing

On the basis of multiple regression analysis, it was found that Entertainment and Self-expression (beta= 0.580, t = 7.68, and p=0.00) significantly impact an Instagram subscriber’s intention to use this platform. As a result, H1 got accepted. The impact of Social Interaction was found to have an insignificant impact on User Intentions (beta= -0.072, t = -1.26, and p=0.208). As a result, H3 got rejected. To summarise the results, H1 & H2 got accepted and H2 got rejected. The third hypothesis proposes the impact of Impression Management on User Intentions, which was found to be statistically significant (beta= 0.401, t = 6.55, and p=0.00). As a result, H2 got accepted.

### Conclusion

The objective of the study was to “explore determinants of young Indian subscriber’s intention to use Instagram”. Based on the results of multiple regression analysis, it was concluded that two factors (Entertainment & Self-Expression and Impression Management) act as the determinants of a young Indian subscriber’s intention to use Instagram.

The results indicated that Impression Management (IM) strongly predicts a user’s Instagram usage intentions. These results are in consensus with Sheldon, Rauschnabel & Antony (2017) who found Impression Management as one of the major reasons behind the usage of Facebook amongst baby boomers in the USA. Statistical validation of another hypothesis confirms the role of entertainment and self-expression in shaping intentions to use Instagram amongst young Indian users. Since this construct is newly developed by this research, there exists partial literature support to validation of the relationship. Previous studies such Hwang, Su (2018) did find a positive impact of self-expression and or entertainment on attitude or intentions to use a social media platform.

Interestingly the impact of social interaction on shaping usage intentions was found to be inconsequential. These results contradict Papacharissi, Rubins (2000) who found social interaction as one of the nine motives for using Facebook but partially confer with the results drawn by Smock, Elision, Lampe (2011) who found social interaction to be a predictor of a user’s intention to comment or post content on social media but insignificant to group sharing behaviour and status updates. Due to a lack of consensus over the role played by social interaction motives in forming usage intentions, the need for further investigation is underlined.

### Managerial Implications & Future Agenda of Research

With the advent of the growing popularity of Instagram as a social media platform amongst Indian users, the findings from this study are expected to make important contributions to the existing knowledge base on usage intentions and patterns. The research resulted in the development of a multi-faceted construct named Entertainment and self-expression which needs to be validated by applying it to a larger or diverse sample group. Understanding user behaviour is expected to help Instagram marketers fine-tune their content and target audience strategy accordingly.

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