

Analysing the Effects of Instagram ‘Reels’ on Identity Construction of Pune’s Youth

Kimaya Mehta¹

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune

*Corresponding author details

Abstract:

The rise of Instagram as a well-liked social media platform has revolutionised how people create and express their social media identities. The emphasis on visual content, follower count, and content curation on Instagram has changed how people display themselves online. By examining how users interact with the site and the ways in which Instagram changes their self-presentation, this study attempts to investigate the influence of Instagram on social media identity.

The research methodology uses survey data as well as content analysis of Instagram profiles, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. According to the findings, Instagram has a big influence on how people build their social media identities because users utilise self-presentation strategies like filtering, cropping, and editing to display a polished image to their followers.

Users' content creation and interactions with their followers are also influenced by Instagram's algorithms and emphasis on popularity and engagement.

The study comes to the conclusion that Instagram has changed how people express their social media identities, with users strategically positioning themselves to build appealing online personas. The influence of the platform on identity creation and self-expression emphasises the need for additional study on how social media affects the establishment of both individual and group identities.

Keywords: social media, Instagram, social identity, self – Identity, Body Image

Introduction:

When it was first introduced in 2010, Instagram soon rose to become one of the most well-liked social networking sites, with over a billion active monthly users by 2021. Instagram users have the option to post pictures and videos, engage in likes and comments with others, and follow accounts that are relevant to their interests. This platform has significantly influenced how people display themselves on social media and in general.

Social media networks tended to prioritise written information over visual content before Instagram came along. The focus on photographs and videos that Instagram places so much emphasis on has, however, changed how individuals display themselves online. Users of the platform can design and curate a unique style for their profile using tools like filters and editing tools to demonstrate their interests and to convey their identity.

A culture of self-promotion and comparison has also been cultivated by Instagram's emphasis on followers and likes, where people frequently gauge their own worth in relation to their follower or like count. As a result, there is a condition called "Instagram envy," where people may feel jealous of the lifestyles or successes of others as they are depicted on the platform.

Additionally, Instagram has had a big impact on the fashion, beauty, and travel industries, as influencers and brands have used the platform to advertise their goods and services. Influencer marketing has transformed the way companies promote and given people new ways to make money from their online presence.

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Literature Review:

Over the past two decades, social media has undergone a dramatic metamorphosis, going from simple online communities to complex platforms that support commerce, entertainment, and communication. The emergence of Bulletin Board Systems (BBS), which allowed users to publish messages and share information in a centralised system, ushered in the first social media platforms in the 1970s. The first genuine social media platform, Six Degrees, was developed in the 1990s when the World Wide Web began to take off and allowed users to establish profiles, find friends, and send messages to one another.

As the use of the internet increased, social media platforms changed and varied, each providing special features and capabilities. In the early 2000s, Friendster, MySpace, and LinkedIn first appeared. In the late 2000s, there was YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. Although each platform had its own distinctive characteristics, they all enabled users to interact with one another, share content, and display themselves in a particular way.

Instagram and Social Media Identity:

The 2010 advent of Instagram revolutionised the social media landscape, especially in terms of how users express themselves online. Instagram's emphasis on visual content, such as images and videos, as opposed to other social networking platforms, allows users to curate and display an idealised version of themselves. The platform also popularised the idea of the "Instagram influencer," where anyone with a sizable following may make money from their online visibility by endorsing brands and goods. [1]

Social media identity has been significantly impacted by Instagram's focus on curating and visually appealing material. In order to offer an idealised version of oneself that is consistent with their personal brand or desired image, users are now more likely to meticulously control their online presence. As a result, there has been a change in how individuals perceive and project their identities online, with a greater focus now being placed on aesthetics, personal branding, and the development of an online persona.

Instagram has significantly influenced how people show themselves on social media by giving people a place to create and exhibit an idealised version of themselves. With increasing emphasis on personal branding and the development of an online persona, the platform's concentration on visual material and curation has changed how users perceive and project their identities online. The impact of Instagram on social media and how people express themselves online is likely to endure. [6]

Definition and Conceptualization of Social Media Identity

The way people show themselves online through their social media profiles, conversations, and posts is known as their "social media identity." It is a sophisticated concept that includes both purposeful self-presentation and other people's perceptions. Numerous elements, such as individual preferences, social conventions, cultural expectations, and platform-specific features, have an impact on social media identity. It is dynamic and subject to change through time, reflecting alterations in the experiences, environment, and self-concept of an individual.

Over the past ten years, Instagram has become one of the most widely used social networking sites. It has had a big impact on social media identities with over one billion active users. Instagram is largely a visual platform with a focus on photo and video sharing. It provides a variety of tools, such as filters, editing tools, and the capacity to selectively choose which photographs to share, for users to control

their online presence. With the help of these capabilities, users can carefully craft their online personas, deciding what details of their lives to make public and how they want to be regarded by others. [8]

Additionally, Instagram has influenced how social media persona is created. Because of the platform's heavy emphasis on aesthetics and visual appeal, influencer culture and the use of curated feeds have grown. Users now feel obliged to live up to a new aesthetic and lifestyle standard in order to win social acceptance and attention. The platform's algorithm also favours popularity and participation, creating a culture of likes, comments, and follows that can influence how users see their online identities.[7]

Instagram has significantly influenced how people show themselves online and how their digital personas are built, which has had an impact on social media identity. New criteria for style and beauty have been established, participation and popularity have been encouraged, and people have access to effective tools for managing their online personas. It's critical to comprehend how social media affects our sense of self and identity as it continues to play a significant role in our lives.

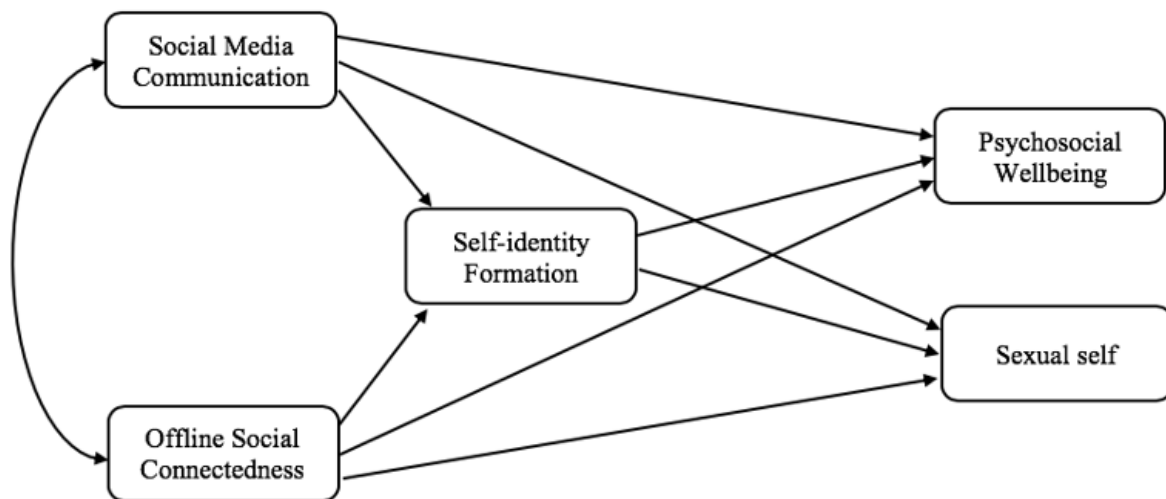


Figure 1: A Theory – Driven Conceptual Model for the Influence of Social Media use on Adolescents' Psychosocial Development. (Karimitar)

Instagram as a Social Media Platform

With over one billion active users, Instagram is one of the most well-known social media networks and has become an essential part of our lives. The ability to upload visual content, such as images and videos, on Instagram has revolutionised how users engage with social media. The platform has a big impact on social media identity because it allows users to build a digital persona that represents their values, hobbies, and lifestyle through carefully chosen visual content. [5]

People's online personas have changed as a result of Instagram's focus on visual content. Users can improve their photographs and videos on the platform using the filters and editing tools to make them look better. As a result, consumers are more aware of how they seem online, which has led to the development of carefully maintained online personas that are frequently distinct from their real selves. A perception gap between one's online and offline personas has resulted from this, giving rise to the

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phenomenon known as "Instagram vs. Reality," in which users portray a highly edited version of themselves on the platform.

Influencers, who have a big impact on social media identities, are a term that emerged on Instagram. Influencers are people with a significant following on the platform who use their influence to advertise goods, services, and ways of life. They frequently curate their content to fit with their specialty or brand, which results in the development of a distinct online persona. [8] People's perceptions of their online identities have changed as a result, and many now aspire to become influencers or adopt the lifestyles of their favourite influencers.

Instagram has evolved into a self-expression tool that anyone may use to explore and display their talents. Users have been able to display their talent in photography, art, and other types of creative expression thanks to the platform's emphasis on visual content.[6]

This has resulted in the development of a community of photographers, artists, and other creatives who each have a distinct online identity.

Instagram's emphasis on visual content has changed how people see and present themselves on social media, having a huge impact on social media identity. There is now a perception gap between one's online and offline personalities as a result of the platform's distinctive features, including filters, editing tools, and influencers, which have helped to create a tailored digital persona. Instagram has evolved into a tool for personal expression as well, fostering a community of artists with distinct online personas. [3]

Instagram's promotion of a visual and carefully managed portrayal of oneself has had a tremendous impact on social media identity, giving rise to influencer culture, normalising filters and photo editing, and creating niche groups.

Previous studies looked into how Instagram affected different facets of social media identity. First and foremost, Instagram encourages the visual depiction of oneself because it emphasises photographs and videos as the main forms of communication. As a result, influencer culture has emerged, where individuals carefully edit their profiles to attract a huge following and promote goods and services. [2] Filters and photo editing have become more common due to the pressure to create a certain image of oneself on the platform, which might distort reality. Realistic standards of beauty are distorted by this. According to Fardouly et al. (2017), this has been connected to detrimental impacts on self-esteem and body image. Second, Instagram has made it possible for specialised communities to emerge around shared identities or interests, giving users a platform to interact with like-minded people. Micro-influencers have emerged as a result, who have tiny but very active followings within particular niches. The development of these communities has also been connected to the emergence of a brand-new identity known as the "Insta identity," which is influenced by the aesthetic and culture of the platform [2]

Thirdly, Instagram's function as a venue for self-expression and self-promotion can be considered as having an impact on social media identity. The platform enables users to produce and distribute content that reflects their unique passions, principles, and life experiences. New varieties have since emerged as a result of this. Narrative and poetry on Instagram are forms of expression. [8] Because of the platform's emphasis on self-promotion, a brand-new line of labour called influencer marketing has also emerged in which users may make money from their online profile by endorsing goods or services.

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The promotion of a visual and carefully controlled picture of oneself on Instagram has had a tremendous impact on social media identity, resulting in the rise of influencer culture, the normalisation of filters and photo editing, and the establishment of specialised communities. Users' sense of self, body image, and self-esteem have been affected in both positive and bad ways as a result of this. Future studies should continue to examine how Instagram affects social media identity and the effects of this influence on people and society at large. [9]

With over one billion active users, Instagram is one of the most well-known social media networks and has become an essential part of our lives. The ability to upload visual content, such as images and videos, on Instagram has revolutionized how users engage with social media. The platform has a big impact on social media identity because it allows users to build a digital persona that represents their values, hobbies, and lifestyle through carefully chosen visual content.[10]

People's online personas have changed as a result of Instagram's focus on visual content. Users can improve their photographs and videos on the platform using the filters and editing tools to make them look better. As a result, consumers are more aware of how they seem online, which has led to the development of carefully maintained online personas that are frequently distinct from their real selves. [3]A perception gap between one's online and offline personas has resulted from this, giving rise to the phenomenon known as "Instagram vs. Reality," in which users portray a highly edited version of themselves on the platform.

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Instagram has evolved into a self-expression tool that anyone may use to explore and display their talents. Due to the platform's emphasis on visual material, users can now display their talent in photography, art, and other kinds of creative expression.[5]

As a result, a community of photographers, creatives, and artists has emerged on the platform, each with their own distinct digital identity.

Instagram's emphasis on visual content has changed how people see and present themselves on social media, having a huge impact on social media identity. There is now a perception gap between one's online and offline personalities as a result of the platform's distinctive features, including filters, editing tools, and influencers, which have helped to create a tailored digital persona. Instagram has evolved into a tool for personal expression as well, fostering a community of artists with distinct online personas.

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videos as the main forms of communication. As a result, influencer culture has emerged, where individuals carefully edit their profiles to attract a huge following and promote goods and services.

Filters and photo editing have become commonplace due to the need to display a certain image of oneself on the platform, which can distort reality and establish an unattainable standard of beauty. According to Fardouly et al. (2017), this has been connected to detrimental impacts on self-esteem and body image. [2]

Second, Instagram has made it possible for specialised communities to emerge around shared identities or interests, giving users a platform to interact with like-minded people. Micro-influencers have emerged as a result, who have tiny but very active followings within particular niches. The development of these communities has also been connected to the emergence of a brand-new identity known as the "Insta identity," which is influenced by the aesthetic and culture of the platform (van Dijck, 2018). [4]

Thirdly, Instagram's function as a venue for self-expression and self-promotion can be considered as having an impact on social media identity. The platform enables users to produce and distribute content that reflects their unique passions, principles, and life experiences. New forms of expression, such as Instagram poetry and storytelling, have emerged as a result of this. Because of the platform's emphasis on self-promotion, a brand-new line of labour called influencer marketing has also emerged in which users may make money from their online profile by endorsing goods or services.

The promotion of a visual and carefully controlled picture of oneself on Instagram has had a tremendous impact on social media identity, resulting in the rise of influencer culture, the normalisation of filters and photo editing, and the establishment of specialised communities. Users' sense of self, body image, and self-esteem have been affected in both positive and bad ways as a result of this. The impact of Instagram on social media identity, as well as the effects of this impact on people and society at large, should be further investigated in future studies. [9]

Objectives:

To examine the impact of Instagram on social media identity by analysing the ways in which the platform has shaped and influenced the presentation and construction of self-image, as well as exploring the potential psychological and social effects of these changes.

To achieve this objective, the following research questions will guide the thesis:

1. How has Instagram affected the way users present themselves online and construct their social media identities?
2. What are the psychological and social implications of the changes in self-presentation and identity construction brought about by Instagram?
3. How has Instagram's emphasis on visual content influenced the way users interact with and perceive others online?
4. In what ways has Instagram contributed to the rise of influencer culture and the commodification of personal branding?
5. How do users navigate the tension between presenting an idealised self on Instagram and maintaining authenticity in their online identity?

This research paper will draw on existing literature on social media, identity construction, and self-presentation, as well as empirical research on Instagram's impact on user behaviour

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and attitudes. The research will employ both qualitative and quantitative methods, including content analysis of Instagram posts, surveys and interviews with Instagram users, and examination of popular influencer accounts.

The findings of this research paper will contribute to our understanding of the ways in which social media platforms like Instagram shape our sense of self and our relationships with others, as well as informing discussions on the potential benefits and drawbacks of these changes.

Ultimately, the research paper aims to shed light on the complex and evolving nature of social media identity and the role of platforms like Instagram in its construction.

Research Problem:

Instagram has changed the way people express themselves and communicate with one another online as it has grown in popularity over the past several years. Instagram offers a venue for self-expression and creativity, but it also puts pressure on users to adhere to particular ideals of social status, lifestyle, and attractiveness. This study intends to investigate how Instagram has influenced social media identity, including how people establish their own perceptions of themselves, how they create online identities, and how they keep up their social networks. This research aims to shed insight on the complicated relationship between social media and identity and the potential ramifications of this relationship for people and society at large by examining the function of Instagram in forming social norms and expectations.

Research Questions:

This study will explore the following research questions:

1. How has Instagram changed the way people present themselves on social media?
2. What specific features of Instagram contribute to its impact on social media identity?
3. How does the culture of Instagram influence users' self-presentation?
4. In what ways has Instagram influenced broader cultural norms around identity and self-expression?

This study will shed light on how social media sites like Instagram are influencing how we view identity and self-expression by responding to these research questions. Researchers in the fields of communication and media studies, as well as anyone else interested in learning how social media shapes our cultural practises and personal identities, will find the study's conclusions to be of interest.

Research Methodology:

This study will investigate the effect of Instagram on social media identity using a qualitative research design. For this study, qualitative research is useful since it enables a thorough examination of the viewpoints and experiences of Instagram users. Semi-structured interviews will be the main strategy used in the study for gathering data. The researcher will then be able to learn more about how Instagram has impacted users' identity development, self-presentation, and platform interactions.

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Sampling

Purposive sampling will be used in the study to choose participants who are frequent Instagram users. Social media and internet forums will be used to find participants. To ensure that the results represent a range of experiences and opinions, the study will attempt to include participants from a variety of backgrounds and demographics

Data Collection

Participants will be interviewed using internet video conferencing tools in semi-structured interviews. With the participants' permission, the interviews will be audio recorded, and the researcher will take thorough notes all throughout the process.

The interviews will explore the following areas:

- How users present themselves on Instagram
- The role of Instagram in constructing identity
- How Instagram has influenced users' offline identities
- The impact of Instagram on users' relationships with others

Interview Questionnaire

1. How often do you use Instagram?
2. How important is Instagram to your daily life?
3. Do you feel that Instagram has influenced your self-expression online?
4. Have you ever altered your behaviour or appearance to fit Instagram's beauty standards?
5. How often do you compare yourself to others on Instagram?
6. Do you feel that Instagram has impacted your self-esteem or body image?
7. Do you feel that Instagram has made it easier or harder to connect with others?
8. Do you feel that Instagram has made it easier or harder to maintain genuine relationships?
9. Have you ever felt pressure to portray a certain image or lifestyle on Instagram?
10. How has Instagram influenced your perception of celebrities and influencers?
11. Do you feel that Instagram has made it easier or harder to discover new interests or hobbies?
12. Have you ever purchased a product or service based on an Instagram post or advertisement?
13. Have you ever used Instagram to express your political views or advocate for a cause?
14. Do you feel that Instagram has influenced your online behaviour outside of the app?

Data Analysis

Instagram has significantly influenced how people promote themselves on social media because it has grown to be a popular medium for this purpose. Users are able to establish and maintain a particular character online by using features like filters, hashtags, and photo editing tools. As Instagram allows for the selective portrayal of facets of one's life, this persona may differ from their offline self.

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The site has also influenced fashion, beauty, and lifestyle trends because influencers and celebrities use their profiles to advertise goods and display their sense of style.

Because of this, a brand-new category of famous people known as "Instagram influencers" has emerged, who significantly influence the purchasing choices of their followers.

However, because users could feel under pressure to maintain a particular appearance or level of interaction on the network, Instagram has also been linked to detrimental impacts on mental health.

Feelings of inadequacy, worry, and even sadness may result from this.

Overall, the research indicates that Instagram has had a multifaceted effect on social media identity, influencing both broader cultural and commercial trends as well as how people display themselves online. However, it's crucial to take into account the platform's possible detrimental consequences on mental health and wellbeing.

Instagram has had a big impact on social media identity because it gives people a place to display an extremely idealized image of themselves. Users' feelings of self-worth, social comparison, and relationships have been impacted in both positive and negative ways as a result of this. The limits of existing studies, however, necessitate greater study into the complex ways that Instagram influences social media identity and the possibility of countermeasures.

Social media platforms have become a crucial component of contemporary communication, giving people a way to communicate and connect with others in novel ways.

With over a billion active users globally, Instagram in particular has become one of the most popular social networking sites. Instagram's emphasis on visual content has greatly influenced how people show themselves online and, as a result, how they create their social media identities. This thesis will examine the good and negative effects that Instagram has had on social media identity, as well as the shortcomings of existing research and potential future lines of inquiry. [10]

Positive effects of Instagram on social media identity

Instagram has given people a place to display their originality, skills, and accomplishments. Due to the fact that people now obtain feedback and validation for their work from others, this has had a good effect on people's self-esteem. Additionally, Instagram has made it possible for users to connect with people who share their passions and interests, promoting a sense of belonging and community.

Negative effects of Instagram on social media identity

Additionally damaging to social media identity, Instagram has made people feel under pressure to display an overly idealised version of themselves. Social comparison and a

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lowering of self-esteem have resulted from people feeling inferior in contrast to others' highlight reels. The emphasis on physical appearance on Instagram has also helped to maintain false beauty standards and body dissatisfaction.

Limitations of research on Instagram and social media identity

The study of Instagram's effects on social media identity is becoming more popular, yet it still has some limits. Self-reported data, which might be biased or erroneous, is used in many research. Additionally, the majority of studies have concentrated on Instagram's negative consequences, with little research exploring its potential beneficial effects or potential moderating factors.

Future directions for research and potential interventions

Future studies ought to look into the complex ways that Instagram affects social media identities, including any moderators that might have an impact. Age, gender, and cultural background are a few examples of possible contributing factors. Interventions should also be created to lessen Instagram's negative effects on social media identity, such as those that encourage self-compassion and honest self-presentation.

Conclusion:

Social media identity has been significantly impacted by Instagram. Instagram's platform has made it possible for people to present their lives and selves in a highly edited and stylized way. Users have been able to create a distinct image of themselves and their hobbies using the app's many features, such as filters, captions, and hash tags, which has resulted in a more performative and idealized portrayal of identity.

The way people portray and create their online personalities has been significantly influenced by Instagram's influence on social media identity. The app has created new avenues for self-expression and moneymaking, but it has also sparked debate over performative identity, the consequences of which include the potential for social media to reinforce negative beauty standards and echo chambers. It will be crucial as social media develops to critically assess how it affects identity and work towards a more genuine and inclusive online persona.

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